



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

by Heng Sao Tian Ya



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Library of Heaven's Path

– Tian Dao Tu Shu Guan –

- Volume 11 -

-Author-

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Chapter 1001

How Noisy!

He had spent several centuries cultivating these nine Darkgold Venom Beetles, and he had spent an unimaginable wealth and fed it a vast amount of fresh blood before he could nurture them to maturity. In a sense, it was no joke to say that they were even more precious to him than his own son. And yet, in the blink of an eye, they had collapsed to the ground, not moving at all. It took all of the mental resilience he had to not go insane in that moment.

Seeing the hall master and the Darkgold Venomous Beetles' state, the surrounding crowd glanced at one another in bewilderment.

"Are those Darkgold Venomous Beetles... poisoned to death by Sun Qiang?"

"That fellow actually carries an even more formidable poison than that of the beetles?"

"While attempting to poison that fellow to death, they ended up being poisoned to death instead..."

...

After realizing what was going on, their faces warped in frenzy.

Given their deep comprehension of poison, it didn't take too long for them to uncover the true reason behind the beetles' death—they were killed by an even formidable poison than the one they carried!

From the start to the end, the beetles had only landed on Sun Qiang's body for a brief moment. Given so, no matter how inconceivable it was, there was only one possibility to the situation... The other party carried an even more fearsome poison in him!

The other party had stood still for the beetles to bite him, but it ended up being the beetles who were the ones who died instead...

The spectators couldn't help but feel frenzied by the sight.

This was the Poison Hall, the ground where all of the top poison users of Hongyuan Empire, or even the entire Qingyuan Conferred Empire, were at. And yet, the precious poisonous beetles of the hall masters ended up being poisoned to death? It was truly a huge irony!

"I will kill you!" the hall master bellowed with utmost rage.

At this moment, the hall master bore no semblance to the elegant and dignified old man he was before. His eyes had turned red in delirium, and it seemed like he would not rest until he ripped the fellow before his eyes apart.

However, that was to be expected.

The Darkgold Venom Beetles were his Lifebound Venomous Bugs, and their deaths didn't just signify that the staggering amount of resources he had devoted to cultivating them had gone to waste. More importantly, it had caused a huge trauma to his soul, causing his cultivation to plummet. He was a powerful Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivator before, but at this moment... it would already be a huge blessing if he could exert the might of a Saint 2-dan pinnacle cultivator.

Boom!

Since even the Darkgold Venom Beetles were unable to poison the other party to death, the hall master knew that the other poisons he had in his possession were unlikely to work as well. Roaring furiously, his zhenqi flurried, forming a massive palm in the sky that struck down with imposing momentum.

But before the palm could strike 'Sun Qiang', the latter abruptly stood up, and with his eyes still closed, he flicked his wrist and whipped out a spear.

In an instant, his aura changed. It was even more fearsome than Zheng Yang back then. With a spear in his hand, his presence felt as if a majestic dragon amongst the clouds, dominating the world with its fearsome might.

Huala!

He tossed the spear upwards with incredible might, and the two forces clashed with one another in the sky.

A huge shockwave burst forth from the collision, forcing Zhang Xuan to take two steps

backward. After which, with a forceful step, he leaped upwards to grab his spear before directing it down towards the enemy.

In this instant, it felt as if the line between spear and man had been thinned. The spear was part of the man, and the man was part of the spear as well—Spear-Man Union. Immense zhenqi was channeled into the spear, and it was further augmented with the incomparably powerful physical strength which Zhang Xuan possessed. Even before his spear could reach the other party, the bluestone pavement on the ground had already burst open. The ground where the hall master stood abruptly collapsed inward, creating a huge depression.

"Damn you!" Bellowing furiously, the hall master charged up furiously to face Zhang Xuan.

Had it been under normal circumstances, as powerful as the other party was, he was confident that he would have been able to subdue or even kill the other party easily with his Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivation.

However, all nine of his Lifebound Venomous Bugs had just been killed. Both his body and his soul had sustained severe damage, preventing him from even exerting a tenth of his original strength. Clashing directly with the other party, he gradually felt that he was being overwhelmed.

But... the enemy was only a Nascent Saint!

"I don't believe that I can't kill you!"

Bellowing furiously once more, the hall master drove his zhenqi to the limits, such that it was beginning to release 'gulu gulu' noises, reminiscent of boiling water.

Boom!

As the spear tip and the palm collided with one another, a loud explosion sounded. The sheer force emanated from the collision reduced all building in an area of several hundred meters into dust. The poison masters who had been hanging around the corner to watch the show suddenly felt an immense threat on their life, and they hurriedly retreated in fear, not daring to stand close.

Pu!

The closed eyes 'Sun Qiang' seemed to be unable to withstand the full might of the hall master. Spurring a mouthful of blood, he was sent flying before crashing heavily onto the ground.

The cultivation of the Saint Ascension Decipher did granted Zhang Xuan the strength to challenge opponents beyond him, but there was a limit to it... the strength harnessed by the hall master was simply too great. He was no match for it at all.

But of course, if his soul was in his body at this moment, he would have been able to use the Library of Heaven's Path to peer through the other party's flaws and design a combat strategy to corner the other party. However... having only his reflexes to rely on at the moment, he could only clash face to face with the other party, and that clearly placed him in a very disadvantageous position.

"Die!" After knocking 'Sun Qiang' flying, the hall master rushed forward to pursue him.

From the previous collision, he had gained a rough gauge of the other party's strength, The other party was indeed formidable for a Nascent Saint, but compared to him, the other party was still lacking a little. As long as he were to push on forcefully, not giving other party an opportunity to catch a breather, he would surely be able to corner the other party and kill him!

Hu!

Sensing danger from the man before him, 'Sun Qiang' seemed to have gotten apprehensive. Tossing the spear in his hand out towards the hall master, he hurriedly turned around and fled.

In the blink of an eye, he was already a few hundred meters away.

"Where do you think you are escaping to!" Not expecting the other party to have no principles at all, fighting arrogantly with his eyes closed a moment ago only to be fleeing shamelessly a moment later, the hall master bellowed angrily. He quickly charged forward and sent another palm strike at the other party.

Hong long!

The overwhelming might of the palm smashed a huge depression into the ground. However, the other party was simply too nimble, evading his attack with ease.

"Stop him!" Seeing the other party getting faster and faster, the hall master knew that he wouldn't be able to keep up with the other party given the severe injuries his body had sustained. Thus, he turned around and commanded.

"Yes!"

Not daring to hesitate, the elders and the vice hall masters hurriedly rushed forward to pursue 'Sun Qiang'.

With great speed they pursued the other party, but the other party was even faster. On top of that, he was darting around randomly with his eyes closed. As a result of that, he was crashing forcefully into everything in his way, knocking down buildings of all sorts.

In just a few moments, the entire island was cloaked in a massive cloud of dust. Even the ancient buildings which had stood proudly for innumerable years as the heritage of the Poison Hall hadn't been spared from the destruction.

Looking at how the heritage which the predecessors had entrusted to his hands been devastated by the fellow before him, the hall master felt as if his head was going to split apart. Flicking his wrist, he whipped out a token and infused zhenqi into it. The token gradually rose to the air, and seemingly communicating with some kind of unique power, it emanated a blinding radiance.

"I am the 30th Hall Master of the Poison Hall. I command for the activation of the Great Guardian Formation..."

Hong long long!

As the voice sounded, the light radiated by the token grew brighter and brighter. The massive formation which hid the entire island seemed to have been awakened by some kind of unique power, and it gradually whirled into action.

The formation of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall's founding ancestor was not only able to hide the island, it could also corner and poison to death any invaders of the island easily!

The fellow was willfully causing destruction as he escaped. If he was left to be, the innumerable years of Poison Hall's heritage could very well be destroyed.

Weng!

As the formation came to live, a powerful might burst towards the escaping Zhang Xuan not too far away.

Hula!

The power of the formation was omnipresent on the island, and it fell at a speed too fast for Zhang Xuan to dodge. In an instant, his movement had been completely sealed, as if a cage had been constructed around him.

"Hmph, let's see how you can escape from this!"

Noting the tremendous strength of the formation, the eyes of the hall master lit up as he hurriedly made his way over. However, before he could rush up to the other party, the trapped middle-aged man seemed to have suddenly received an epiphany as a look of realization crept onto his face. After which, he took a few steps back within the seal and stomped his feet forcefully.

Kacha!

The seal immediately broke.

After which, the middle-aged man raised his right hand and grasped the air abruptly.

Hu!

Following which, the token before the hall master suddenly seemed to run amok, and it flew straight into the other party's hand.

"What?" Widened his eyes in shock, the hall master was horrified.

To break the seal and snatch the token from his hands so easily, there could only be one possibility... The other party had a thorough comprehension of the massive formation around the island and was aware of the flaws regarding it. By exploiting its flaws, the other party had stolen the controlling rights over the formation from him!

But... how could this be possible?

Back then, the founding ancestor had spent many years studying the blueprint and the

geographical terrain of the island, reworking it again and again, each time bringing it a step closer towards perfection, before he finally set up the formation. There were quite a number of predecessors who were proficient in the Way of Formations as well, but even they were unable to grasp the entirety of the formation... The fellow had been here for less than a day, and he had already made sense of it and found its flaws?

Just how in the world could such a thing happen?

As astonished as the hall master was, he moved swiftly to wrestle control over the token, which served as the key to controlling the formation. However, in the next moment, the middle-aged man, with his eyes still closed, abruptly flicked his wrist.

Huala!

An incredible force assaulted the hall master, causing his body to stiffen all of the sudden...

With the control of the formation in the middle-aged man's hand, the other party had called upon the power of the formation to seal his movements, returning the favor to him.

"Damn it!" With eyes blazing with fury, the hall master exerted his full strength to struggle free of the formation.

But before he could do so, a foot suddenly arrived right before his face.

Peng!

Cling cling cling!

Under the impact of the kick, several of the hall master's teeth fell to the ground, and blood trickled down his nose and mouth.

"Sun Qiang, how dare you strike me? I will tear you apart..." the hall master roared furiously.

Yet, before he could finish his words, the other party's punches and kicks fell in rapid succession on him, effectively silencing him.

Pilipala!

Within just ten breaths, the hall master had already sustained at least forty fists and sixty kicks, leaving his dignified face distorted in an almost comical manner. If thrown out onto the streets, there was no one who would dare believe that he was the amicable hall master.

Under normal circumstances, even if he was unable to kill the other party, the other party wouldn't be able to harm him easily either.

Who could have known that his decision to draw upon the formation to corner the other party would backfire on him instead? He ended up handing power over to the other party's hand, giving the other party an opportunity to pummel him viciously. At that moment, the hall master felt so frustrated that he felt like his mind was going to explode.

He was the head of the Poison Hall, the most powerful and authoritative man of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall!

Yet, for his formation to be used against him like that, what the heck was this...

Why did it feel like the other party was the hall master instead whereas he was the invader?

"Hall master..."

The elders and vice hall masters who had rushed over to help arrived at this moment. Upon the hall master being on the verge of death from being pummeled by 'Sun Qiang', they scratched their heads in bewilderment, not knowing what they should do.

They thought that with the hall master making a move himself, victory would be theirs to clinch. They would be able to get even the other party and vie back their dignity. Yet, who could have thought that their hall master would first have his Lifebound Venomous Bugs being poisoned to death first before being pummeled so pitifully...

"Retract your killing intent towards Sun Qiang! Otherwise, he will kill you..." Noting that the hall master was on the verge of death, an elder suddenly recalled the situation earlier and shouted.

"Retract my killing intent?"

The swollen-faced hall master had no idea how that would aid him in his current

plight, but there must be a rationale for that elder to utter such words. Thus, suppressing his rage, he attempted to quench the killing intent he had for the other party.

Right after doing so, 'Sun Qiang' indeed came to a halt. He sat down on the ground not too far away and continued to cultivate.

From the start to the end, he had never opened his eyes, not even for an instant. It was as if everything he had done thus far was a product of his sleepwalking.

"This... What is going on? I was actually pummeled by a sleepwalking person?"

The eyes of the hall master reddened in indignance.

As the head of the Poison Hall, it would be one thing for him to be pummeled by an expert, but the other party was just a Nascent Saint, a sleepwalking one at that!

What a farce this was!

...

At this moment, Zhang Xuan's soul had just finished collecting the books on the third floor of the Compendium Hall.

Sensing a torrent of spiritual energy gathering outside, as if a formation coming into life, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure. After which, the deafening ruckus of innumerable buildings being collapsed reverberated relentlessly in the air.

Eventually, Zhang Xuan snapped in annoyance, "How noisy! Can't they quieten down a little? I am trying to read here!"

Chapter 1002

Irreconcilable

Zhang Xuan was seething with anger.

Where was he? The Poison Hall!

A place isolated from the world, filled with countless formidable poison masters... Shouldn't it be an extremely peaceful place where everyone diligent strove to create the best poison they could?

'Dang lang!', 'hong long!', 'boom!'...Just what the heck were those? It was not as if they were some kind of demolition company...

All he wanted was some peace so that he could finish reading all of the books in a single go... But with such noise, how was he supposed to do so?

Seriously, did the poison masters know no civility at all?

That was really too much!

He would really need to talk to Elder Xu about this matter so that he could enforce some order around here.

"Forget it, I will just have to tolerate it for this period of time!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

In any case, he was just a guest. He would have to leave very soon, so all he had to do was to tolerate the incivility of those poison masters for the time being.

Having collected the books in the first three floors into the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan's comprehension of poison had reached 3-star pinnacle.

Even though the books were rich in content, there was nothing much regarding the cure for the Innate Poison Body. Most of the books that touched on it only introduced it as an extremely fearsome constitution. It rarely appeared in the world, perhaps not

even once in ten thousand years, but the moment it did, a devastating calamity could possibly befall on the world.

According to the records, the founder of the Poison Hall possessed the Innate Poison Body as well. There was an incident where the founder of the Poison Hall had clashed with Kong shi, and even the latter had to tread carefully around it, fearful of its might.

"There is nothing at the moment, but I might be able to find a solution once I go through the books in the higher floors..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he consoled himself.

However, considering how noisy it was, it was unlikely that he would be able to make much progress. Thus, he decided to leave for the moment and return later on.

Thus, he returned back to the first floor and slipped past the two guards at the entrance, leaving the Compendium Hall. However, just as he was about to return back to his residence, he couldn't help but freeze at the sight before him.

The dignified and stately buildings four hours ago had been reduced to rubble. Within an area of several dozen kilometers, there was not a person to be seen at all.

"T-this..." Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

Through his eyes, he could tell that this was caused by a battle between experts.

But shouldn't the battles be limited to the Sparring Hall? Why would they start fighting in the midst of the city instead?

Look at what they had done to the beautiful city...

"They are indeed uncivil, these buildings have been around for several thousand years! To fight in the middle of the city, don't they know that these are important heritages that we have to protect?" Zhang Xuan muttered as he shook his head.

The poison masters sure are lacking decorum.

Just look at the master teachers; even to hold a life-and-death duel, they would apply for permission with the headquarter first before deciding on the format of the duel. Yet, this... to start fighting in the middle of the city, reducing so many beautiful buildings into rubble... It is really hard to fathom how a human could be so

inconsiderate.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan began flying back to his residence. However, before he could get far, he suddenly realized something.

He hadn't really noticed it due to the formation around the Compendium Hall earlier, but now that he was finally out, he suddenly found that his physical body... had changed locations. It wasn't in the accommodation which Elder Xu had provided for him anymore.

"What is going on?" A look of wariness slipped into Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Typically speaking, his physical body should remain in the residence, not moving at all. For it to be somewhere else instead... Did someone make a move on him?

If so, that would be really bad.

His physical body had already acquired the ability of Mind of Void, granting it the ability to act reflexively to avert danger, but... if the enemy was an expert, such as the hall master or vice hall master of the Poison Hall, he would still be in grave danger.

After all, they were 7-star poison masters. In comparison, his Nascent Saint cultivation body was truly too weak.

If he were to return late and find his physical body completely crippled, it would be too late for tears.

Anxious, he immediately charged in the direction where his physical body was. Before long, he saw his physical body seated on the floor, not moving in the least. Opposite to it stood a disfigured old man, who was currently looking at his physical body with malicious intents in his eyes.

"It's fortunate that I returned in time..." Seeing that his physical body was safe, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

As he quickly slipped back into his body, he couldn't help but realize something.

The area where his physical body was sitting at... wasn't it the center of the destruction? Could it be that all of the destruction throughout the city was caused by him?

But that shouldn't be!

His physical body did have the ability to retaliate and flee in face of danger, but it had always been rather reliable. At the very least, he trusted it more than his clone and Vicious, and it had never caused him any trouble before... If he was truly the culprit behind the damage, how was he going to explain this to Elder Xu?

With such thoughts in mind, his soul swiftly harmonized with his body, and his eyes slowly opened.

"He is awake!"

"Un, he really is awake..."

"He is already plenty formidable with his eyes closed. With his eyes open now, there would surely be no one who will be able to stop him... Are we going to meet our doom here?"

...

Seeing the other party open his eyes, a commotion broke out in the surroundings. Many faces paled in fright.

Even with his eyes closed, the other party was able to kill fourteen of their elders and pummel the hell out of their hall master... Now that his eyes were opened, would he massacre their Poison Hall clean?

"Y-you..."

Upon seeing 'Sun Qiang' open his eyes, the hall master cowered in fear.

Everything that had happened had dealt a deep trauma to him, causing him to feel innate fear towards the middle-aged man before him.

"Cough cough, where am I? What... what is going on?" Looking at everyone's frightened look, as if he was a lunatic that had come out from a horror movie, Zhang Xuan felt a little stifled within. With a bewildered look, he gazed at the crowd around him.

All I have done is to leave for a short moment to read some books... What in the world

happened in between? For so many of you to be surrounding me, and not to mention, the frightened look on your faces...

"Where am I? What is going on?" Hearing those words, the hall master spurted yet another mouthful of blood.

The heck! The other party really was sleepwalking!

While other Saint 3-dan cultivators were being overwhelmed by Saint 4-dan and 5-dan experts, he was being done in by a sleepwalking Nascent Saint cultivator... Just the thought of him left him feeling suffocated within.

To end up in such a plight despite being the head of the Poison Hall, it sure was embarrassing.

"Calm down, don't get agitated. I just woke up from my cultivation, so I am not too sure what is going on here. Why don't you fill me in on the details?" Seeing the disfigured fellow before him spurting blood out of agitation after seeing him waking up, Zhang Xuan hurriedly consoled.

"You... Puu!"

Agitated? Agitated your head!

Not too sure what is going on?

Can you get any more shameless than that?

All of this had been done by you! The reason why I have spurted blood is due to your pummeling!

After taking advantage of us like that, you are going to shirk responsibility just by saying you don't know what is going on?

Due to the intense fluctuations in his emotion, the hall master spurted yet another mouthful of blood. He felt so furious that it felt like flames could burst forth from his eyes.

"You aren't too sure what is going on? You have fought with the hall master and came all the way here, destroying countless buildings on the way... You are unaware of all of

that?" Seeing that the other party didn't seem to be feigning ignorance, an elder bucked up his courage and asked carefully.

"I fought with the hall master?" Zhang Xuan blinked his eyes in confusion. "Who is your hall master? I have never met him before, so how could I have fought with him? Could there be a misunderstanding somewhere..."

On the way here, he had heard from Elder Xu that the head of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was a 7-star poison master, a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert who boasted incredible fighting prowess.

Against ordinary Saint 2-dan experts, his physical body, driven by the Mind of Void, might still be able to achieve victory. However, against a Saint 3-dan expert... his physical body would be crushed instantly!

A completely one-sided fight couldn't possibly be called a battle, and it couldn't have lasted so long as to cause such devastating damage to the city.

Before Zhang Xuan could finish his words, the disfigured fellow before him abruptly stood up furiously and hollered, "I am the hall master!"

"You?" Zhang Xuan leaped in horror.

When he saw that disfigured fellow, he thought that the other party was just a random passer-by watching the commotion... Never once had he considered the possibility that the other party might be the strongest expert in the Poison Hall!

"I was the one... who injured you?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He actually reduced a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert to such a tragic state?

Could it be that... the strength of his Mind of Void had been enhanced somehow?

"You..." The hall master was on the verge of erupting.

"I am truly apologetic. I was in a unique cultivation state earlier, and everything I did is only out of my reflexes... I truly have no idea what is going on!" Knowing that it was likely that he would only worsen the conflict if he were to dwell on the matter, Zhang Xuan hurriedly apologized.

He was here to learn, not to make enemies. What he had to do at this moment was to find out what had happened so as to find out if there was anything he could do to salvage the situation.

After all, he had promised Elder Xu that he would keep a low profile, and such was his intention as well. As far as it was possible, he hoped to resolve this matter peacefully.

"You... really don't know?" Seeing the other party emphasize again and again that he was unaware of the happenings, the elders and vice hall masters glanced at one another with a hint of doubt in their eyes.

Thinking back, the other party had never opened his eyes throughout the entire incident. It was as if he was sleepwalking, his body moving on reflex only to retaliate against those who were making a move against him...

Could it be that this really wasn't an intentional act on his part, but just his reflexive action?

But if that was really the case, it would portray the Poison Hall out to be a clown instead.

The other party hadn't used his full strength throughout the entire course of the matter, relying solely on his reflexes, and yet, by the end of it, the Poison Hall was already on the verge of collapse... If others were to learn of the matter, their Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall would become a huge laughingstock!

"I really have no idea!" Zhang Xuan shook his head affirmatively.

He was indeed confused by everything that was around him at the moment.

His physical body possessed no consciousness whatsoever while his soul was out, so he was dumbstruck by the abrupt situation he found himself in as well.

"It's like that. You were in your courtyard cultivating, and Vice Hall Master Ming... who is the teacher of Duan Ren whom you have beaten up earlier, barged into your residence to exact vengeance for his disciple. Yet, who knew that you would disregard his existence entirely... As such, he began making a move on you..." Seeing that Zhang Xuan didn't seem to be lying, the elder began to fill him in on the matters that had occurred.

"S-so... I was the one who caused all of this?" Zhang Xuan widened his mouth in shock, and his eyeballs nearly bulged out to the ground.

He was only off for a moment to collect some books for Wei Ruyan... Who could have known that his physical body would kill fourteen elders of the Poison Hall, cripple a vice hall master, pummel the hall master, and destroy large swathes of the Poison Hall within that short timeframe...

It seemed like... he was really in deep trouble this time around!

"Indeed, you were the one who did it!" The elder nodded.

"I..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head helplessly.

His original intention was indeed to collect all of the books in the Poison Hall quietly and leave as soon as possible. Who could have thought that his physical body would place him in such deep trouble in a crucial moment like this...

Doomed!

If he had only pummeled the hall master, he could still find an excuse to put a lid on the matter and resolve the matter peacefully with a shake of the hands and a compensation of a couple of high-tier spirit stones... But he had killed fourteen elders and destroyed innumerable precious heritage buildings of the Poison Hall... Not to mention, he had even 'poisoned' the other party's precious to death...

Even if he were to take out everything he had, there was no way he could compensate for that!

At this point, this could already be deemed as an irreconcilable grudge...

"This won't do. If I were to leave this matter be, there is no way they will allow me any chance to browse through the books in the remaining four floors... Furthermore, there is no saying that I might require the help of the poison masters to resolve Wei Ruyan's Innate Poison Body, so I can't fall out with them now..."

A deep frown emerged on Zhang Xuan's forehead.

Chapter 1003

I Am Your Founder

His goal of coming to the Poison Hall wasn't to make a name for himself or to battle with the combat masters.

It was to save Wei Ruyan, who was plagued by the Innate Poison Body.

Yet, before he could finish reading their books, his body had already killed fourteen of the other party's elders and left the hall master in such a state... If Wei Ruyan's treatment were to be delayed due to this, how could he face her deceased father?

It was not that he didn't consider letting his clone out to replace his physical body, but his clone was even more unreliable than it. If he were to let it out, there was a good chance that all of the elders, vice hall masters, and even the hall master himself might have been dead by now.

As for letting out the Violetleaf King and the Byzantium Helios Beast... considering that Zhang Xuan had come alone, it would be difficult for him to explain the additional guests. Since the Poison Hall had isolated itself on an island in the midst of the Viridian Cloud Sea, even going to the extent of casting a huge Hidden Formation over the island, it was natural that they didn't welcome guests.

If it was found that he had brought others in on his own accord, it might strain his ties with those of the Poison Hall.

He had thought that since he was only out to study for a brief moment, considering his identity as Elder Xu's guest, no one should dare to cause him trouble. That was also the reason why he had chosen to leave his body in the room, or else his sudden disappearance would be hard to explain as well.

Who could have thought that his 'careful considerations' would end up resulting in this huge conflict?

Looking at the raging poison masters before his eyes, Zhang Xuan felt his hair stand on ends.

If everything were to fail, perhaps he could release the Violetleaf King and the Byzantium Helios Beast to help rid society of this poisonous tumor?

As soon as this dangerous thought popped into Zhang Xuan's head, he hurriedly shook it off.

He was a master teacher, not a butcher. Even though poison masters were generally snubbed in society, they hadn't caused any significant damage or harm to others. Not to mention, it would be utterly wrong to stereotype poison masters just by their occupation. Putting aside morals, he wouldn't be able to even get past his own conscience.

After contemplating for a moment, Zhang Xuan asked, "May I know where Elder Xu is?"

Under such circumstances, he could only rely on a familiar face to speak up on his stead and mediate this situation.

"Elder Xu has brought a threat amongst us, resulting in the death of our elders. For his betrayal of the Poison Hall, I ordered my men to apprehend him. He shall be dealt with shortly later!" Hearing Zhang Xuan's question, the hall master replied through gritted teeth.

Had it not been for Elder Xu bringing this man of unknown background here, their Poison Hall wouldn't have suffered such staggering losses. Regardless of how they dealt with 'Sun Qiang' eventually, Elder Xu must be punished for his actions!

"Betrayal of the Poison Hall? T-this... Elder Xu's loyalty to the Poison Hall is clear for all to see! Don't you think that it's a little too extreme to make such a decision?" Zhang Xuan stood up in agitation and hurriedly spoke up for Elder Xu's behalf.

It was one thing for the other party to hold him accountable for this matter; after all, it was a fact that his physical body did cause devastating damage to the Poison Hall. But... Elder Xu had nothing to do with it!

The other party deeply trusted him and even offered him advice out of concern, fearing that he might meet with danger in the Poison Hall. If the other party were to be implicated by his actions, he would be guilt-ridden.

"You are indeed strong, but we can't the deaths of so many of our elders to go

unavenged. Even if our Poison Hall has to fight down to the very last man, we won't back down!" the hall master roared furiously.

At this point, it didn't matter whether the other party had done it unintentionally due to his sleepwalk or not anymore. The deaths of the elders had already created an irreconcilable grudge between them, and this was not something that could be resolved without spilling blood!

There was no way the Poison Hall could let the murderer of fourteen of their elders get away scot-free. The other party might be a powerful adversary, but the Poison Hall's dignity was at stake!

They couldn't let the reputation of the Poison Hall collapse in their generation, or else they wouldn't be able to face their predecessors!

"Men, bring Xu You up here. We will first execute him before dealing with this fellow!" Waving his hand, the hall master bellowed.

"Yes!"

The elders hesitated for a moment before two of them flew away. A short moment later, they arrived with Elder Xu locked between them.

Looking at the destruction around the Poison Hall, Elder Xu's lips quivered as self-reproach crept into his eyes.

In his view, if he hadn't brought Sun Qiang over, such a matter wouldn't have happened. At this point, he couldn't help but wish that the man who had died back then was him and not Elder Xue!

"Do you have anything to say for yourself?" the hall master asked coldly...

"I..." Elder Xu's body stiffened. A moment later, he sighed deeply and said, "For causing such deep trouble, I am willing to accept any punishment..."

It was due to his inability to discern people properly that resulted in such a situation. Even a thousand deaths wouldn't absolve him of his sins.

"It's good that you admit to your crimes!" Turning his face away from Elder Xu, the hall master commanded, "Execute him!"

In truth, he also didn't want to execute Elder Xu. After all, they had spent centuries together with one another. However, if he didn't do anything after all that had happened, he could very well lose the hearts of the poison masters.

As the head of the Poison Hall, this was a painful decision that he had no choice but to make.

"Yes!" The other elders nodded before turning their gazes to Zhang Xuan with a look of difficulty.

"There's no need for you all to make a move. I will do it myself..." As old friends, Elder Xu couldn't bear to allow his friends to bear the burden of killing him. Thus, gritting his teeth, he began channeling his zhenqi, intending to direct them towards his heart to crush it.

However, before he could do so, 'Sun Qiang's' voice sounded.

"Wait a moment."

Lifting his gaze, he realized that, at some point, the anxiety on 'Sun Qiang's' face had been replaced with absolute composure. His head was slightly tilted upwards, and his hands were placed behind his back. With an air of majesty around him, he gazed deeply into the sky.

"Since it has gotten down to this, there is no need for me to conceal my identity as further..."

"Identity?"

Everyone frowned in bewilderment...

The hall master also couldn't help but turn his gaze over, curious to see what that fellow was up to.

"Indeed!" Nodding, Zhang Xuan continued with a calm but powerful voice. "Do you know what kind of constitution the founder of the Poison Hall has?"

"Our founder possesses the Innate Poison Body, fearing no poison in the world. It is due to this that our founder was able to create the Poison Hall and bring it to glory..."

Not knowing what the other party was up to, the hall master replied. He strongly desired to kill the fellow before him, but considering the latter's strength, he knew that there was no way he could win without careful preparation. Thus, he could only rein in his rage for the time being.

As a poison master, he wasn't foreign to the matters surrounding their founder.

"Indeed. It is the Innate Poison Body!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "Then, do you know why the poisons you have used against me is completely ineffective?"

"This..."

The crowd fell silent.

In truth, this was also something which they were perplexed about.

To be able to neutralize all of their poisons and even the hall master's beetles, could there really be such a powerful antidote in the world?

"Could it be... Could it be that you also possess the Innate Poison Body?" The hall master's body stiffened as he turned his gaze over.

The other party first spoke about the founder of the Poison Hall before pointing out how he didn't fear poison... Clearly, he was trying to drive at something!

"No, I don't." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You don't?" The crowd glanced at one another in astonishment.

If you don't possess the Innate Poison Body... what the hell are you spouting all of those crap for?

"To be more exact, I am not too sure either. It's just that whenever I start cultivating, I will fall into a peculiar state. It would be as if another soul has taken over my body, leaving me unable to control my actions. In that state, I will be completely immune to all poisons, similar to that of the Innate Poison Body..." Zhang Xuan said.

"Another soul has taken over your body?"

"Completely immune to all poisons?"

Everyone was dumbfounded.

Are you trying to tell us a horror story here?

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan shook his head with a bitter smile. "I know that what I am saying might sound ridiculous, and I don't blame you for not trusting you. However, this is the truth... Previously, when I fought with you all, despite the dangerous situation I as in, I didn't open my eyes at all, right?"

Hearing those words, the crowd nodded.

Indeed. The other party hadn't opened his eyes once in the duration of the entire battle, as if he was sleepwalking.

"In truth, it is not that I didn't want to open my eyes, but that my body was being controlled by another will... And if I am not mistaken, the will is the founder of the Poison Hall!" Zhang Xuan said.

"There is another will inside your body... the founder of the Poison Hall?"

"You must joking!"

Everyone frowned.

The founder of the Poison Hall was a figure who shared the same era with Kong shi, and it had been several dozen thousand years since then. There was no way the other party could still be alive at this point, so how could the other party possibly possess this fellow here?

"I know what I am saying might sound ridiculous, but such is the truth. Since that is the case, why don't I continue cultivating and allow him to control my body? Perhaps, he could answer the doubts you have!" Shaking his head, a look of difficulty surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face. After a moment of hesitation, he clenched his jaws in determination and sat cross-legged down on the floor.

Hong long!

As soon as he sat down, everyone immediately felt the formation surrounding the entire island buzzing into life, seemingly driven by someone.

Following which, 'Sun Qiang's' eyes slowly opened, and a heavy and ancient voice came out of his mouth, "Why? Are you doubting my identity?"

The voice was very different from the tone which 'Sun Qiang' took earlier. It harnessed domineering authority which exerted immense pressure on one's soul. While it wasn't as intense as the killing intent of the Otherworldly Demons, there was no doubt that one's soul could shatter if placed under such pressure for extended periods of time.

Upon hearing the voice, everyone's eyes narrowed in astonishment.

Be it the voice or the aura, it was vastly different from the 'Sun Qiang' from a moment ago. Without a doubt, they were two completely different people!

Furthermore, the aura emanated felt ancient, reminiscent of someone who had lived through many eras.

"Elder, you said that you are our founder... but do you have any evidence to prove so?" With cold sweat trickling down his forehead, the hall master gritted his teeth and asked respectfully.

"Are you saying that I need to prove myself to you? Who do you think you are?" the seated 'Sun Qiang' uttered coldly.

"It's not that we are doubting elder's identity, but... our founder has disappeared from the world for more than several dozen years, so it's really difficult for us to comprehend how you can be sharing a body with this person over here..." the hall master replied hurriedly.

"Hmph, I shall give you the benefit of the doubt and pardon you this once!" "Sun Qiang' harrumphed coldly. At this point, he paused for a moment, seemingly reminiscing the sorrows of the past before continuing, "In truth, I am only a remaining soul fragment of my former self. It is out of sheer coincidence that I managed to latch myself onto a Seven Hearts Lotus and survived. It is Sun Qiang over here who found the Seven Hearts Lotus and brought me out of the ancient domain I was in.

"Eventually, I latched myself to his body, but I am only able to appear while he's cultivating... Otherwise, do you think that a mere Nascent Saint lad will be able to see through this formation, remain impervious to all poison, and defeat you all easily?" "Sun Qiang' harrumphed.

The hall master was stunned.

To be honest, even at this point, he still could hardly believe that he had lost to 'Sun Qiang'.

He could tell that the other party was indeed only as Nascent Saint, so how could a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert like him lose to the other party?

Even if his Lifebound Venomous Bugs had been killed, resulting in a significant decline in his strength, he was still able to draw forth might comparable to a Saint 2-dan pinnacle!

For a Nascent Saint to be able to stand toe-to-toe with him... Not once in his long life had he ever met such a formidable genius before!

But what was the most frightening of all was that the other party's zhenqi seemed to be endless. After killing fourteen elders, wounding a vice hall master, and fighting with him for so long, the other party didn't seem to be weakened in the least... That was completely inconceivable!

And on top of that, the other party was completely immune to poison!

Not only was the other party fine after being bitten by his Darkgold Venom Beetles, the other party even managed to poison his beetles to death instead... There was something clearly very peculiar about this situation.

Not to mention, there was still the matter concerning the formation...

To be able to comprehend and even wrestle control over the formation from him, that was definitely not a feat a Nascent Saint cultivator was capable of.

"Elder, is there any concrete evidence you can provide to prove that you are indeed the soul fragment of our founder?" the hall masters asked doubtfully.

This was a matter concerning their founder, and as the hall master of this Poison Hall branch, he had to deal with this matter prudently.

"Hmph, if it was just me, I would have killed all of you without any hesitation for doubting my words... You are fortunate that Sun Qiang is unwilling to see any more bloodshed and advised against it, so I will overlook this matter!"

'Sun Qiang' harrumphed coldly. "The founder of the Poison Hall possesses not only the Innate Poison Body but the Poison Soul Constitution as well... As poison masters yourselves, surely I need not say anything more on how one can verify the Poison Soul Constitution?"

Chapter 1004

Paying Respects to the Founder

"Poison Soul Constitution?" The hall master paused for a moment before nodding.

The Poison Soul Constitution, as the name suggested, meant that one's soul was completely immune to poisons of all kinds. For several dozen millenniums, ever since the passing of the founder of the Poison Hall, there had never been another person in the world with such a constitution. If they could confirm that the fragmented soul did possess such a constitution, they could confirm that the other party was indeed the founder!

Even if that wasn't the case, an individual who possessed such constitution would surely be bound to advance to unprecedented heights in the future. It was just a matter of time before the other party became a 9-star poison master and made a mark for himself in the world.

With such thoughts in mind, the hall master didn't hesitate for too long before flicking his wrist to whip out a jade bottle.

This jade bottle was slightly different from the other bottles which he used to store his poisons. It was roughly the size of his palm, and there were bizarre inscriptions carved on its exterior.

The body of the closed eyes 'Sun Qiang' stiffened for a brief moment upon seeing the bottle, seemingly noticing something unbelievable. However, this anomaly only surfaced only for an instant. Before anyone could notice it, he had already reverted back to his impassive state.

"This is a poison which can easily exterminate a soul, the [Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison]! It is concocted out of the killing intent of Otherworldly Demons and many precious herbs. It was left behind by one of the predecessors of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall, and it is powerful enough to even eradicate a Saint 4-dan expert's soul easily. Even with my current proficiency, I am unable to concoct such a medicine." the hall master explained.

"If you truly possess the Innate Poison Body, you will surely be able to consume the poison without suffering the slightest damage."

There was only one way to ascertain whether an individual possessed the Poison Soul Constitution or not—the consumption of poison.

As long as the other party was fine after the consuming the lethal poison, it would mean that the other party wasn't lying.

On the other hand, if the other were to die after consuming the poison, it would mean that they have successfully avenged the deceased elders of the Poison Hall. In a sense, the hall master and the others had nothing to lose from this.

"Very well." Sun Qiang' nodded. With a hook of his finger, the jade bottle flew into his hands.

Without any hesitation, he uncorked the bottle, and a gush of malicious intent burst forth from it. It pierced right into one's mind, raising a violent storm in one's head.

The hall master and the others hurriedly turned their gazes over and noted that 'Sun Qiang' didn't show the slightest hint of weakness under the assault of the poison aura. Not only so, his face was gradually growing redder and redder, as if he had just consumed some extremely nourishing substance.

It was as if what he had been exposed to wasn't poison but a heavenly tonic instead.

"Legend has it that those who possesses the Innate Poison Body are able to advance their cultivation by consuming poison. As long as there is a sufficient supply of poison, one's cultivation and fighting prowess can be raised by leaps and bounds within a short period of time... Could the rumors be true?" an elder mumbled in astonishment.

The Innate Poison Body was extremely rare in this world, such that it was considered to be something that only existed in the legends. However, there were some rumors and records regarding it within the books. It was said that those who possessed the Innate Poison Body were able to derive power from coming into contact with lethal poison that could kill others easily, and as such, they were the most suited to become poison masters.

That was also the reason why many poison masters hoped to obtain such a constitution as well.

However, the Innate Poison Body was only effective on one's body whereas the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison was something that assaulted the soul. For the other party's soul to not be wounded but instead nourished by it, that reflected a lot...

There was little doubt about it at this point, the other party did possess the Poison Soul Constitution!

A person who possessed such a constitution and was capable of peering through the secrets regarding the great protective formation of the Poison Hall with a glance and challenging experts far stronger than him... Even if the fellow before him wasn't the founder, it was almost certain that there were intricate ties between the both of them.

"Is this enough evidence for you?" Just as the hall master was deep in thoughts, 'Sun Qiang's' voice sounded once more.

"I..." The hall master was still slightly hesitant.

It was certain that the other party possessed the Poison Soul Constitution, but to say that he was the founder of the Poison Hall... this entire matter was still a little too ridiculous for him to believe.

"Why? You still don't believe me? If not for Sun Qiang begging me earnestly for me to spare you, I would have all of you killed right here and now for your insolence!"

Hong long!

With a furious bellow, an incomparably powerful aura burst forth from 'Sun Qiang's' body. In that instant, the man before them suddenly felt like a divine being, an existence that was inviolable by any mortal.

The divine aura emanated by the other party erased all lingering doubt in the hall master's mind.

Without any hesitation, he kneeled to the floor and kowtowed, "Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall's hall master, Ruo Qingyuan, pays respect to the founder!"

In the fight earlier, it was apparent that none of them was a match for the other party... Wielding such overwhelming advantage over them, the other party could have just slaughtered them clean. There was no need for the other party to waste words explaining to them at all...

Perhaps, the founder might have really managed to survive through the ages by hiding a fragment of soul within a Seven Hearts Lotus! Perhaps, the person before them was really their founder!

Having reasoned all of this out, the hall master couldn't help but tremble in agitation.

For the founder to actually appear here... if the other party were to just offer them a bit of pointers, their fighting prowess would surely be able to soar by leaps and bounds! It wouldn't be long before the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was brought to greatness!

Without a doubt, this was a great opportunity to him.

"Hmph, it seems like there is some hope for you after all!" Seeing that the other party finally admitted his identity, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Without opening his eyes, he lifted a finger and pointed at himself. With a grim face, he continued, "Sun Qiang over here is my savior. If not for him, my soul could have perished long ago. Thus, all of you here shall obey his words in the future. Take his commands to be those of my own as well. Anyone who dares to disobey him... don't blame me for not having mercy on you!"

"Yes!" Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan and the other elders hurriedly nodded.

Who would dare to disobey a direct order from the founder?

"Also, I was the one who killed those elders and wounded Vice Hall Master Ming. If you wish to exact vengeance, you are free to come at me!" Zhang Xuan continued.

"I dare not to..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan quickly shook his head fearfully. "Vice Hall Master Ming and the others are at fault for offending you, they only have themselves to blame for their own fate. We dare not to exact vengeance for them!"

"Hmph, I doubt you would dare!" Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly as his voice gradually echoed into silence. A moment later, his eyes slowly opened once more, and his confusion was reflected clearly in his eyes. It was as if he was completely unaware in everything that had happened before, "What just happened? Hall master, I plead with you not to make things difficult for Elder Xu. He is really not to blame for this matter, all he did was to bring me here..."

Noting the look of bewilderment on Zhang Xuan's faces, everyone immediately

realized that the founder's soul had gone dormant once more. Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan hurriedly clasped his fist and said, "Poison Master Sun, please don't worry. Our founder has already explained the situation to us. Elder Huang and the others have shown blatant disrespect to our founder, and they deserve the fate that fell upon them. On the other hand, for bringing our founder back to us, not only has Elder Xu not sinned, he is even a meritorious subject of our Poison Hall. Naturally, we will reward him generously! From today onward, he shall replace Ming Zhen as the vice hall master of the Poison Hall..."

"Vice hall master?" Elder Xu was stunned to hear the abrupt news. He hurriedly shook his hand and said in a fluster, "Hall master, I am unqualified to assume such a position!"

He was only a 6-star pinnacle poison master, and the minimum rank one needed to have to become the vice hall master was 7-star. If he were to be promoted haphazardly like that, the others would surely voice their complaints,

"Don't worry, they won't dare to do anything with me here. You are more than qualified to assume this role, so don't turn it down anymore!" Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan waved his hand.

The merit for escorting their founder back to the Poison Hall was immeasurable. Besides, they were still hoping to depend on Elder Xu to speak well of them before the founder on their behalf. Perhaps, their founder might just offer them some pointers on the Way of Poison under Elder Xu's coaxing...

"Alright then..." Seeing the other party insisting on it, Elder Xu eventually nodded in agreement.

He turned his gaze towards Sun Qiang once more, and this time, his eyes were filled with admiration.

This explained the other party's inconceivable immunity to and incredibly profound knowledge regarding poison! With just a short lecture, the other party was able to show a veteran poison master like him a whole new perspective towards the interpretation of the Way of Poison... The other party was indeed lucky to have the founder's fragmented soul in his body. Very few in the world would meet with such fortuitous encounter in their life.

"It seems like I managed to get past them for the time being..." Seeing that he had

managed to convince everyone of his new identity, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He turned his gaze towards the words on the bottle in his hand once more, and his eyebrows shot up once more.

Gesturing for the Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan to come over, he asked, "Hall master, do you know what language are these words in?"

The inscriptions on the jade bottle of the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison was extremely familiar. He had seen words identical to them before—the map which Wu Yangzi had left behind!

This was precisely the reason why Zhang Xuan was shocked when he scanned the bottle with his soul earlier. Unable to hold his intrigue back any longer, he asked about it.

"These inscriptions? I have no idea as well... Two thousand years, a hall master of our Poison Hall found an ancient booklet from an ancient domain, and the content of the booklet happens to be written in this very language. Due to our inability to interpret it, we were unable to figure out what it means... However, by a stroke of coincidence, we found that these words are exceptionally effective in sealing malicious intents and that sort. Thus, we began using it as a seal in the Poison Hall..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan replied.

"Ancient booklet? Sealing malicious intent?" Zhang Xuan frowned in confusion.

He had seen the same words on the map Wu Yangzi left for him... Were the purpose of those words to seal malicious intents as well?

"Is that ancient booklet still around? Is it possible for you... to allow me a look?"

After pondering for a while, Zhang Xuan was still unable to make sense of the situation. Thus, he decided to ask for the ancient booklet to take a look at it.

As there was no error in the coordinates and labels on the map, there was no particularly useful flaw reflected in the Library of Heaven's Path. However, if he could obtain the booklet with the other party spoke about, he just might be do a cross reference between the two and decipher bits of the language.

Furthermore, two thousand years ago... That coincided with the timing which the map of the ancient domain first appeared, according to what the Violetleaf King said. Could

there be a connection between the two?

"Ancient booklet... Back then, many elites of the Poison Hall lost their lives to acquire that booklet. The hall master back then felt that the booklet was inauspicious, so he ordered for it to be buried with him upon his death..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan shook his head.

"The ancient booklet is buried?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "May I know where it is at the moment?"

"It is in the Mausoleum of Hall Masters..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan replied.

"I see." Hearing that it was located in one of the forbidden grounds of the Poison Hall, Zhang Xuan decided to ask no further.

If he were to ask too much about the matter, he just might incur the other party's suspicions.

After questioning everything there was to question, Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan ordered his men to swiftly prepare a new accommodation for 'Sun Qiang'.

As for the matter regarding the poison master examination, considering that the other party was able to even poison his Lifebound Venomous Bug to death, there was no longer any purpose to the examination. Thus, he helped the other party apply for the 7-star poison master emblem straight.

"I will be heading to the Compendium Hall to study for a while..."

Considering Zhang Xuan had received his 7-star poison master emblem and his identity as the founder, there was no longer for him to sneak into the Compendium Hall anymore. With the current esteemed standing he had, he could just walk in openly.

"Yes!" Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan and the others didn't dare to voice any word of objection. They escorted the other party to the entrance of the Compendium Hall, and after seeing the other party entering the premises, they glanced at one another meaningfully.

"Vice Hall Master Xu and the others, follow me to my residence for a while."

"Un!" The others nodded.

Not too long later, they arrived at a courtyard. Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan activated a formation to isolate their auras before looking deeply at the crowd.

"Everyone, what are your views on the matter today?"

"Since we can confirm that the soul in Sun Qiang's body does indeed possess the Poison Soul Constitution, we can be certain that there is an intricate link between him and our founder."

"Indeed, that is the Poison Soul Constitution we are talking about! Other than our founder, there has never been another person in the one known to possess such a constitution!"

The other elders nodded in agreement.

They had a deep trust in 'Sun Qiang's' identity as the founder of the Poison Hall.

"Vice Hall Master Xu, what are your views on this matter? Can you share the details of how you met Poison Master Sun with us so that we can analyze the matter?" Hall Master Ruo Qingyun asked.

Chapter 1005

Envoy From The Poison Hall Headquarters

Vice Hall Master Xu You nodded as he went through what he had gone through with Zhang Xuan in detail.

"You are saying that... a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon has appeared in Jingyuan City? He tried to kill you, but it was Poison Master Sun who got you out?"

Everyone was astonished to hear the news.

Otherworldly Demons possessed exceptionally strong fighting prowess, and this was even more so for a Saint 4-dan one. For Sun Qiang to put himself in grave danger to save Xu You... Just this courage itself was something they couldn't compare with.

"Not only so, Poison Master Sun has also imparted me some foundation to utilizing poison on our way here, but due to its profoundness, I was unable to remember too much of it. However, if I could just internalize the small portion which I have remembered, I would surely be able to make huge progress in the Way of Poison..." Xu You couldn't help but say.

"Share it with us..." Hearing that their founder had actually imparted some of his teachings to Xu You, looks of envy surfaced on everyone's faces.

Without hiding a thing, Xu You began reciting everything that he remembered.

By the time he was done reciting, everyone around him had their faces reddened in agitation, their clenched fists trembling uncontrollably beside them.

Just like what Xu You had said, even though the content only touched on the foundation, it was directed straight towards the essence of the Way of Poison. Listening to it had left them with a feeling of enlightenment.

"There's no doubt about it anymore. That soul is definitely our founder... Other than him, there is no one else can possess such a deep understanding of poison..." After a moment of discussion, Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan nodded affirmatively.

Even though Zhang Xuan's argument was convincing, and he had believed most of it, he still couldn't help but hold some reservations regarding the issue due to the sheer incredulity of it. However, after hearing Vice Hall Master Xu You's explanation, the final reservations he held were vanquished.

Only the real founder of the Poison Hall could possibly command such deep understanding of the Way of Poison, interpreting the most basic cultivation technique in such a profound yet direct manner.

"Alright, have our men quickly repair the demolished buildings. As for Duan Ren and Ming Zhen, have them executed for daring to provoke our founder!" Having confirmed his doubts, Ruo Qingyuan issued several orders.

"Yes!" The crowd nodded in agreement.

It was one thing for Ming Zhen and Duan Ren to embarrass themselves, but to implicate so many of them into it as well, unforgivable!

"Alright, we will stop right here today. Vice Hall Master Xu, you should wait outside the Compendium Hall. Once Poison Master Sun is done reading, call me over immediately..." Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan instructed.

"Alright!" Xu You replied.

Just as he was about to stand up and get moving, a frown suddenly appeared on Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan's face. The latter flicked his wrist, and a Communication Jade Token appeared in his hands.

The jade token was emanating a warm glow—someone had just transmitted a message over.

Taking a glance at it, Ruo Qingyuan's eyes lit up, and he hurriedly got to his feet, "An envoy has arrived from the headquarters!"

"The headquarters have sent an envoy over?"

Everyone was astonished.

"Indeed. According to the information I have just received, they are two 7-star pinnacle poison masters, and they are about to arrive. Let's head over to welcome

them."

After saying those words, Ruo Qingyuan quickly left his residence. Not daring to hesitate in the least, the others also swiftly followed suit.

Not too long later, at the elevated platform where Vice Hall Master Xu and Zhang Xuan had landed from their aerial saint beast earlier, the crowd saw a gap appearing in the formation momentarily, and a massive saint beast flew over steadily.

Standing proudly on the saint beast were two elders. Even before coming close, they were already emanating a formidable pressure that forced others to lower their heads before them.

7-star pinnacle poison masters, Saint 4-dan experts!

"Poison Master Bai, Poison Master Hai..." Upon seeing the appearance of the duo before him, Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan's eyebrows shot up, and he hurriedly clasped his fist and greeted.

The Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was well hidden from the rest of the world, but it still maintained intimate relations with the headquarters above it. Poison Master Bai Ting and Poison Master Hai Mingjin were extremely formidable figures in the headquarters, and considering their fame, it was only natural for Ruo Qingyuan to have heard of them as well.

Poison Master Bai waved his hands as he landed from the saint beast, and after scanning through the crowd, he frowned, "Where is Hall Master Ruo? He isn't here to welcome us?"

"Cough cough... I am Ruo Jingyuan!" Ruo Jingyuan said awkwardly.

Disfigured from Zhang Xuan's pummeling, even his wife and parents might not recognize him, let more these two!

"You..." Poison Master Bai glanced at Poison Master Hai, only to see the latter's mouth twitching uncontrollably as well. With a frown, he asked, "Hall Master Ruo, what happened to you?"

One must know that Ruo Jingyuan was a 7-star poison master like them! Even though the other party's fighting prowess was slightly below theirs, there would still be very

few in Qingyuan Conferred Empire who could match him. For an expert like him to be pummeled to such a state in his own base, just what in the world could have happened?

Astonished, they subconsciously turned their gazes to the elders, and what they saw caused their eyelids to twitch as well.

They had only made a sweeping glance earlier, but taking a closer look, they realized that every single one of them was injured. There was only one amongst them who could be considered to be fine.

"This... It is a long story. Anyway, for the both of you to arrive personally, could it be that the headquarter has orders for us?" Shaking his head with a bitter smile, Ruo Qingyuan turned to the duo and asked.

It was not that he was intended to hide it from the other party, but it was simply too embarrassing!

"Two thousand years ago, did your branch obtain a booklet from the ancient domain in Firesource City?" Seeing that the other party was unwilling to speak too much about it, Poison Master Bai also decided not to pursue the matter, considering that it was likely to be a private matter amongst them. Thus, he got straight to the matter at hand.

"Indeed!" Ruo Qingyuan nodded.

Poison Master Sun had just asked him about the booklet, so naturally, he still remembered it clearly at the moment.

"That's good. The headquarter has sent us here to retrieve this booklet." Hearing that the booklet was indeed here, Poison Master Bai heaved a sigh of relief and said.

"Retrieve?" Not expecting the headquarter to go to the extent of dispatching two 7-star pinnacle poison masters over just to obtain a single booklet, Ruo Qingyuan was stunned for a brief moment before he could reply. "The booklet is currently placed in the Mausoleum of Hall Masters. If the both of you aren't in a hurry, allow me to invite you to take a seat at the main hall first..."

The booklet served no particular purpose here. If the headquarters wanted it, he had no qualms about giving it to them too.

However, right after Ruo Jingyuan said those words, he noticed unnatural looks on the faces of Vice Hall Master Xu and the others. One of the elders hesitated for a moment before sending a zhenqi telepathy over, "Hall master, our main hall has been destroyed..."

The main hall was one of the unfortunate casualties of the devastating destruction earlier as well.

Honestly speaking, the two envoys had really arrived at a bad timing. It was embarrassing that they had nothing seemly to show them after what that had happened.

"Ah..." Upon the elder's reminder, Ruo Qingyuan suddenly recalled the matter and said, "Allow me to bring the both of you to my residence to rest then..."

"Your residence?" Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai frowned.

If they had come here as visiting guests, there would be no problem for them to head to be hosted in Ruo Qingyuan's residence. However, they had come in the capacity as envoys of the headquarters this time around, and it was only right for them to be treated as esteemed guests. What was the other party thinking to invite them to his residence instead of the main hall?"

"Allow me to apologize for our discourtesy, but there has been some unforeseen circumstances in the Poison Hall that will make it inconvenient for me to invite you to the main hall..." Noticing the displeased looks on their faces, Ruo Qingyuan shook his head with a bitter smile. "You will understand very soon..."

To be honest, he really had no idea how he should approach the subject.

Flying the way back to the city, it didn't take long for the two poison masters from the headquarters to notice the heap and heap of rubble laid all around the half-collapsed city. They couldn't help but exchange dazed glances.

"This..." Poison Master Hai pointed at the devastation before him, not knowing what he could say.

They were in the Poison Hall, and everyone in here should be their own men. How did such a tragic fate befall it?

"Hai, this matter is really the humiliation of our Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall..." Ruo Qingyuan said.

As the hall master of the Poison Hall, it was indeed embarrassing for him to have allowed it to have fallen to such a state.

Had he not been so reckless then and waited for the other party to explain the situation, such a sight wouldn't have occurred, and he wouldn't be making a fool of himself before the envoys of the headquarters at this moment.

"What happened?"

Glancing at the bruised elders and hall masters, and turning his gaze to the rubble all around him, Poison Master Bai couldn't help but ask.

"It's like that..." Knowing that it was impossible to hide such a huge matter, Ruo Qingyuan hesitated for a moment before revealing everything that had just happened.

"What did you say? Our founder's soul is deposited on the body of someone named Sun Qiang?"

Upon hearing the question, Poison Master Bai frowned, "That's impossible! The founder of our Poison Hall, otherwise known as the [Poison Supremacy], was actually a woman. Back in that era, people used to call her the Fairy of Poison, so how could she possibly have a male voice? Besides, her entire soul had dissipated in that tragic battle back then, so it is impossible for her to have left a fragment of her soul in a Seven Hearts Lotus. No doubt about it, he is definitely a fake!"

"Our founder... is a woman?" Ruo Qingyuan was taken aback.

There were indeed many stories regarding the founder of the Poison Hall going around, but honestly speaking... he was indeed unsure whether the other party was a male or a female!

"Indeed. I haven't really read any books regarding our founder, but I heard it from an 8-star poison master before. It is said that there is also sculpture of her created by her disciple in the headquarters... To possess a male body and speak in a male voice at that, there is no doubt about it. He is definitely a fake!" Poison Master Hai said grimly.

"But... the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison was indeed ineffective against him!"

Furthermore, his body possesses inconceivable immunity towards poison as well..." An elder couldn't help but exclaim.

"As formidable as the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison is, there are still many ways that one can neutralize it! For example, I have a Heavenly Aroma Detoxification Pill here left behind by an 8-star poison master. Once consumed, one will gain perfect immunity to any grade-7 poison and below..." Poison Master Bai replied.

"Besides, there are also many medicinal herbs and plants in nature that possesses the ability to neutralize poison. Putting everything aside, the Bodhi Saint Tree of the Hongyuan Empire royal family can bear a Bodhi Fruit, which when consumed, grants one near perfect immunity to poison of grade-7 and below, and this is including poisons directed to the soul too!"

"This..." Ruo Qingyuan was taken aback.

They were both 7-star poison masters, but the other party were from the headquarters, and their eye of discernment and knowledge were beyond him.

"So... you are saying that he is very likely to be a fraud?" the elder from before asked with a deep frown.

"That is not necessarily so... there are some parts to the story which I am still unable to make sense of. Despite being at Nascent Saint, that fellow already possesses strength which none of you are able to rival. On top of that, for him to be completely fine after being bitten from your Darkgold Venom Beetle and even poison them to death at that... that is a feat beyond my means as well. Most likely... the other party is on par with an 8-star poison master at minimum! But if that is truly the case, there would be no need for the other party to make up such lies..." Poison Master Bai shook his head.

He felt that there was something amiss with that Sun Qiang fellow saying that the founder had possessed his body, but there were still various aspects to the matter which he couldn't make sense of it to refute the other party's claim entirely.

What was the most bewildering was that the other party actually had no request whatsoever! If the other party was intending to pull off something, he would have already attempted to use his standing to force the Poison Hall to comply with his commands. It was impossible that he would feign that he was the founder of the

Poison Hall just to read some books!

"You said that the Sun Qiang person is still in the Compendium Hall at the moment?" After some contemplation, Poison Master Bai was still unable to make sense of the situation. Thus, after some contemplation, a glint flickered across his eyes, and he said, "Why don't I help you test his mastery of poison? If he's truly the founder, he should be fine after it. Otherwise, for feigning the founder, he deserves death!"

"This..." Ruo Qingyuan hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"Alright!"

Chapter 1006

Poison Master Bai Visits

Walking into the Compendium Hall, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

It was not that he wanted to disguise himself as the founder of the Poison Hall, but the situation back then had left him with no other choice.

If he hadn't said that, Elder Xu might very well have lost his life. At the same time, he would have also fallen out completely with the Poison Hall, never to reconcile with one another. While it was wrong for him to have fooled the other party like that, at the very least, he did manage to resolve the problem perfectly. Not only so, he had even been given access to the Compendium Hall as well.

Speaking of disguising as the founder of the Poison Hall, it was really fortunate he had the Violetleaf King's Button of Disguise with him.

It was due to such an artifact that he had been able to disguise Vicious' powerful killing intent as the aura of a powerful human, making Ruo Qingyuan and the others not dare to doubt him. Otherwise, everyone would immediately have realized that Vicious was an Otherworldly Demon, and instead of instilling deference into them, he would only have further worsened the conflict.

However, the effects of the Button of Disguise were still rather lacking as compared to that of Kong shi's writing. It was sufficient to fool a poison master, but it would have been hard to do the same before the discerning eyes of a master teacher.

But still, they will probably figure it out soon enough. I should quickly finish reading through my books first!

While Zhang Xuan did manage to scare the others for the time being, there were many parts of his stories that didn't make sense if one were to think deeper into it. The urgent matter at hand was for him to quickly finish reading the books. As soon as he found a way to resolve Wei Ruyan's condition, he would be able to leave the Poison Hall. This way, the matter could be resolved entirely.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan proceeded on to the fourth floor without any hesitation.

The books on this floor was clearly fewer than that in the third floor. However, the content harnessed within them was far more profound, reaching the level of a 4-star poison master and beyond.

Scanning his gaze over the rows of bookshelves, Zhang Xuan collected the books into his Library of Heaven's Path and converted them into his own knowledge. The more books he collected, the deeper his understanding of poison became.

Within less than two hours, he finished reading through everything on that floor. Thus, he moved on to the fifth floor.

The books on the fifth floor was targeted toward 5-star poison masters, and the number of books was significantly smaller than that of the previous floor once more. Within less than an hour, Zhang Xuan had already managed to collect everything in the room.

Still nothing at all?

After scanning through the books on the fifth floor but still finding no useful news regarding the Innate Poison Body, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but panic.

There were only seven floors to the Compendium Hall, and being at the fifth, he had already covered more than half of the knowledge harnessed in there. Yet, there was still no clue whatsoever. Could it be that the solution to the Innate Poison Body couldn't be found here either?

If that was the case, it would truly be a calamity!

While Wei Ruyan's condition was still stable at the moment, there was no knowing if she could hold on long enough for Zhang Xuan to take her to a higher ranked Poison Hall.

Knowing that it was pointless to panic, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress before moving on. *Forget it, I should just continue for now. If there is still nothing after I go through the last two floors, I will just have to think of another solution.*

The books on the sixth floor numbered less than ten thousand. Zhang Xuan walked

slowly along the bookshelves, taking in everything in sight. Just as he had finally finished taking everything in and was just about to head to the next floor, 'jiya!', the door to the room abruptly opened, and a figure walked in.

The other party was an old man who seemed to be in his sixties. He had a snowy white beard and wrinkly face, but his eyes had a sharp glint, reminiscent of an eagle. His clothes were plain and unimpressive, and he didn't don a poison master emblem on his chest, making it impossible to determine his rank.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan paid the other party no heed and headed straight for the stairs toward the seventh floor. At that moment, however, Zhang Xuan abruptly heard Vicious' voice in his mind.

"Master, that person is even stronger than Ruo Qingyuan. His cultivation has most likely reached Saint 4-dan..."

"Saint 4-dan? A 7-star poison master?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Wasn't the strongest man in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall Ruo Qingyuan? Considering that Ruo Qingyuan was only at Saint 3-dan himself, where in the world did this Saint 4-dan pop out from?

At Saint 4-dan, the other party possessed might that was comparable to the Violetleaf King!

"That's right. He might have concealed his cultivation well, but there is no way he can fool my eyes!" Vicious said discreetly.

After swallowing the Primordial Spirit of the Waterleaf King, Vicious had recovered yet another portion of his cultivation, allowing him to see through the old man without the other party noticing his presence.

Frowning deeply, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt extremely wary of the old man before him.
For a Saint 4-dan to walk in here abruptly... What is he up to?

Zhang Xuan was considering whether or not he should toss the Violetleaf King and Otherworldly Demon puppets out to take the initiative and preemptively subdue the other party when he suddenly thought of something, and he came to a halt.

For an expert of the other party's caliber to appear here, there was no way the other

party was here to read books or to roam around. No doubt about it, the other party was here to find him.

The reason the other party walked around the area instead of making a move on him directly showed that the other party wasn't intending on provoking him. Instead, the other party was trying to sound him out, possibly out of doubt of what he had just said!

If the other party was only attempting to sound him out, there would be no need for him to bring the Violetleaf King out. Otherwise, if he created a huge ruckus, he would only undo all the effort he had just put into appeasing the Poison Hall. On top of that, if the books on the seventh floor were to be destroyed in the midst of the fight, he would only be making things even more difficult for himself.

*A Saint 4-dan expert has already forged his Primordial Spirit, so it won't be that easy for me to fool him... *

Naturally, it would be best if Zhang Xuan could resolve this issue silently. However, there was no way fooling an expert as powerful as the other party could be an easy task.

His claim that he possessed the Poison Soul Constitution was backed by the fact that he had been able to survive the Emerald Serenity Jaundice Poison, making Ruo Qingyuan and the others unable to doubt him. However, such a trick wouldn't work on a Primordial Spirit realm expert.

One who possessed a Primordial Spirit could peer into the soul of another directly to assess it. Zhang Xuan had only gained considerable immunity to poison due to the exchange of soul essence with Wei Ruyan; he didn't possess the real Poison Soul Constitution. Thus, if the other party were to check his soul, it was very possible that he could be exposed!

Thus, the most important matter at hand was for him to prevent the other party from checking his Primordial Soul!

But how could this be done?

...

While Zhang Xuan was in deep thought, the old man was also assessing him with a

deep gaze.

The middle-aged man in front of him was indeed only a Nascent Saint cultivator. There was nothing particularly special about him, and his appearance was also so-so, perhaps looking a little repulsive even.

It was truly a wonder to him how Ruo Qingyuan and the others had been fooled so easily, entirely convinced that the other party carried the soul of the founder within him.

Just as the old man was just about to speak, the fellow before him abruptly rushed forward, heading toward a shelf of books.

"Hmm?" The old man frowned.

Could it be that the other party had noticed that he was concealing his cultivation, and feeling threatened, he was trying to escape as far as he could?

If that was the case, it would truly be a disaster!

Furthermore, judging from the speed, if the other party were to really crash into the shelf, the books might just be utterly destroyed under the impact!

Those books were the crystallization of the knowledge of countless preceding poison masters in the Poison Hall, so how could he allow them to be destroyed before his eyes?

With a grim look, the old man drove his cultivation as he rushed forward, preparing to grab the other party to stop him. However, the other party abruptly came to a halt right before the bookshelf. The next moment, he sat down on the floor and began meditating, seemingly going into a state of cultivation.

Cultivation?

The old man was bewildered.

It was just a moment ago that the other party had rushed forward as if a lunatic, seemingly intent on destroying the books before him. Yet, the next moment, he had abruptly sat down to cultivate? How could a person be so fickle-minded?

The old man was Poison Master Bai Ting from the headquarters. After learning that the person who had impersonated the founder was currently in the Compendium Hall, he had ordered Ruo Qingyuan and the others to guard outside while he made his way in alone.

Just as he was thinking about how he should sound the fellow sitting on the floor out, a calm voice suddenly came from the other party.

"What do you see?"

Bewildered by the sudden words, Poison Master Bai glanced either side of him, and after confirming that there was no one else around, he confusedly pointed a finger at himself and asked, "Are you talking to me?"

The middle-aged man before him nodded.

Uncomprehending of what the other party was driving at, Poison Master Bai hesitated for a moment before replying. "Other than books, I don't think that there is anything else here?"

They were in the Compendium Hall, so naturally, there were only books and bookshelves around them. What other answer was the other party expecting to hear?

The middle-aged man before him sighed woefully, seemingly disappointed by the answer he had received. "I thought that a 7-star pinnacle poison master, a Saint 4-dan cultivator, might have a different view than the others. But from the looks of it... you are no different from them."

"Y-y-you... You can see through my cultivation?" Poison Master Bai narrowed his eyes in shock, unable to believe what he was hearing.

He had concealed his cultivation, and he hadn't brought his emblem with him either. On the surface, he was no different from an ordinary 6-star poison master. Yet, the other party was able to see through him despite having his back against him... This was truly a little hard for him to believe.

"Merely Saint 4-dan, what is there not to see through?" Harrumphing coldly, the middle-aged man 'looked' at the bookshelves before him with his eyes closed and said meaningfully, "These aren't books but knowledge. However, it is a pity that the writers have twisted my heritage into something so unseemly."

"Your heritage?" Poison Master Bai frowned.

"Un." The middle-aged man nodded lightly before sighing deeply once more. "Do you know why you are unable to achieve a breakthrough despite having remained at 7-star pinnacle for so long? The Starweaving Art is indeed a powerful cultivation technique, but it is a pity that an accident you made in the midst of concocting poison has resulted in the complete sealing of one of the Yuanshen acupoints. As a result, you aren't able to knock it open no matter how you try. Truly, a pity."

"Y-you... know that I cultivate the Starweaving Art?" Poison Master Bai's body stiffened in astonishment.

He had come here to sound the other party out, but, before he could say a word, the other party had already uncovered his secrets. It was no wonder he was horrified.

The Starweaving Art that he cultivated had been created by an 8-star poison master. Back when he was younger, he had obtained it coincidentally during a mission. He had thought that with such a powerful cultivation technique in hand, he would surely be able to advance to become an 8-star poison master very soon; he had never thought that he would end up being trapped at 7-star pinnacle for several centuries.

As for the reason he was unable to make an advancement even after such a long time, it was exactly as the other party had said. A mistake he had made in the midst of concocting poison had ended up harming his foundation, resulting in his Yuanshen acupoint being sealed. No matter how hard he tried to break it open, it simply wouldn't budge.

It didn't work even when he was younger, and to date, he was only a hundred years or so away from the end of his lifespan. Most likely, a breakthrough in his lifetime was impossible!

This was something that he had hidden deep within his heart, never sharing it with anyone. Even Poison Master Hai, the other envoy who had accompanied him here, wasn't aware of it. Yet, the middle-aged man before him was actually able to see through it in an instant.

Such an eye of discernment... Could the other party really be the founder?

After all, not even an 8-star poison master possessed such sharp eyes!

"The core of the Starweaving Art lies in its breathing technique. Breathing reminiscent of weaving, guided by the stars. With the poison serving as the nourishment and the stars as the medium, the intent is to weave one's zhenqi through one's body like a thread. Yet, you chose to scatter the thread across your entire body, eventually resulting in the sealing of your Yuanshen acupoint... It will truly be a miracle if you successfully achieve a breakthrough!" Shaking his head in disappointment, the middle-aged man sighed deeply, seemingly lamenting over the mistakes made by a junior who had gone astray.

"I..." With cold sweat trickling down his head, Poison Master Bai was at a loss for words.

To be able to tell the problems in his cultivation with a glance and point out the core of the Starweaving Technique...

This was no longer something that could be explained with just eye of discernment! One had to have an inconceivably deep understanding of the Way of Poison in order to achieve this!

Even the hall master of the branch he was in was incapable of achieving this feat!

Paying no heed to the other party's shock, the middle-aged man continued. "There is no need to get anxious. Truthfully, despite the failure in the concoction of your poison and your mistaken interpretation of your cultivation technique, your Yuanshen acupoint still shouldn't have been sealed so tightly. If I am not mistaken, the reason your cultivation has stagnated entirely is due to a betrayal from someone, am I right?"

"You..." In that instant, Poison Master Bai's eyes nearly plopped onto the ground. Unable to retain his composure and bearings as a 7-star poison master any longer, he stuttered, "H-how did you know?"

Chapter 1007

Beguiling Poison Master Bai

Back when Poison Master Bai was younger, he had indeed suffered the betrayal from another.

It was a brother whom he had trusted deeply. Plagued with envy after learning about the existence of the Starweaving Art, the other party had discreetly switched a medicinal herb that he had prepared for the concoction of an extremely difficult pill, resulting in him being severely wounded in the affair. Not only so, the other party had even assaulted him while he was at a crucial stage in his cultivation, and that incident had nearly left him dead!

Even though he had exacted vengeance after he recovered, poisoning that wretched scoundrel to death with his own hands... the damage caused to his body was already irreparable.

It was due to such a wound that he had been trapped at the Primordial Spirit realm for so long, unable to achieve a breakthrough. This matter had become a huge regret in his life.

It was also due to this incident that he had remained guarded toward everyone before him, never daring to let loose before anyone for fear of being betrayed once more... So how did the middle-aged man before him learn of the matter?

"When you made a move against me earlier, your zhenqi stopped right before your Yunmen acupoint. This shows that there is a blockage there that you are unable to pass through. That acupoint isn't a particularly difficult one to break open, and for a condition like yours to occur, it typically means that one has been injured in the past or that... he is suffering from a mental trauma!"

Without opening his eyes, the middle-aged man continued speaking calmly.

"As for your inability to achieve a breakthrough... While you did conceal your Primordial Spirit well, I can still see it as clear as day. It is extremely powerful, and under normal circumstances, you should have been able to draw it out from your body

long ago to soar into the skies. Yet, there isn't the slightest hint of zhenqi in your Yuanshen acupoint. This suggests that your Yuanshen acupoint is tightly sealed. At the same time, the zhenqi flowing through your body is very distinctive, possessing a thread-like form. Given all that, it wasn't too difficult for me to deduce the entire story!"

"Just by driving my zhenqi a bit... you were able to tell so much?" Poison Master Bai felt his throat running dry.

As a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, he had seen plenty of people who possessed astounding eye of discernment and powerful means that weren't beneath those of a 7-star master teacher at all.

But... to be able to see through so much in just an instant, that was completely unbelievable. He had never seen something like this before!

More importantly, the other party had never opened his eyes throughout the entire process, keeping his back toward him.

This wasn't something that could be described as frightening anymore; it was horrifying.

"It doesn't matter how I see through it; the issue is you. The reason you are unable to achieve a breakthrough is due to your lack of confidence. Without confidence, nothing else will fall in place! How about this? Since you are a 7-star pinnacle poison master, your ability to utilize and discern poison shouldn't be too bad... Let me give you a test."

At this point, the middle-aged man chuckled softly, and 'hu!', a gourd slowly floated over toward the Poison Master Bai. "Look and see if there is poison in here."

"In here?"

Perplexed, Poison Master Bai uncorked the gourd, and an aromatic fragrance gushed toward him. He extended his Spiritual Perception into the gourd, and a moment later, he shook his head and said, "It doesn't have any poison..."

Through checking with his Spiritual Perception, he could tell that even though the wine did contain a higher concentration of spiritual energy, it didn't contain any poison.

"Do you dare have a sip?" the middle-aged man asked.

"This..." Hearing those words, Poison Master Bai froze.

He could confirm that the wine in the gourd wasn't poisoned, but he was still fearful to drink it.

"To doubt even your own judgement, how far can you reach with such a state of mind? It seems like... that is all there is to a 7-star pinnacle poison master!" The middle-aged man shook his head in disappointment.

On the other hand, Poison Master Bai's face reddened in shame.

"You might think that your greatest problem came from your friend's betrayal, but that isn't really so. What that is truly limiting you is your inability to trust even yourself! Whenever you saw your Yuanshen acupoint firmly shut even after several attempts to knock it open, you decided for yourself that it is impossible to succeed and chose to give up. Without the confidence to persevere and take the final step, how can you achieve greater heights?" the middle-aged man asked.

"I..." Poison Master Bai was rendered speechless.

The other party was right. Due to that matter, he had become deeply suspicious of others. As time passed, his suspicions deepened, and eventually, he even began to doubt himself.

"Since you have already confirmed that there is no poison, why won't you drink it? Do you fear that your judgement isn't accurate, or do you fear death?" the middle-aged man said deeply.

Facing the other party's questions, Poison Master Bai's face paled as his body trembled uncontrollably. A moment later, he raised his head and looked at the other party earnestly. "Elder, what should I do?"

Regardless of whether it was the other party's eye of discernment or understanding of poison, they were far superior to his. Even if the other party wasn't the founder, there was no doubt that the other party was his senior in the Way of Poison.

Thus, there was nothing wrong with calling the other party 'elder'.

"You need to break the shackles of doubt in you." With a high and mighty attitude, the middle-aged man spoke affirmatively. "You need to trust your own judgement and drink this gourd of wine. This is the only way for you to vanquish the doubt you have in yourself!"

Hearing those words, Poison Master Bai hesitated. But a moment later, he clenched his jaws tightly and nodded. "Indeed. If I have deemed the wine in the gourd to be devoid of poison, what do I have to fear?"

Since he had already affirmed it himself, why shouldn't he drink it?

Even if he were to be poisoned, he still had the Heavenly Aroma Detoxification Pill with him. That should suffice to deal with everything.

With such thoughts in mind, he uncorked the gourd without any hesitation, and 'Gudong! Gudong!', he drank several large mouthfuls of wine. In that instant, he felt everything he had suppressed deep in his heart being liberated all of a sudden, and a look of delight surfaced on his face. He couldn't help but exclaim, "Excellent wine!"

Due to the betrayal he had suffered once, he didn't trust any outsiders or even himself at that. Such a problem had plagued him for the longest of time, but at this instant... he felt like he had been saved by the other party's gourd of fine wine.

"Elder, thank you for your advice!" Poison Master Bai bowed deeply.

Regardless of whom the other party was, he was still thankful to the other party for dispelling his inner demons.

"Do you believe that I am your founder now?" the middle-aged man asked.

"I..." Poison Master Bai was immediately sunk into an awkward position.

The reason for his arrival there was to investigate the other party's identity. Yet, he had been exposed from the moment that he stepped through the door, rendering everything he had planned futile.

"Elder, both your eye of discernment and understanding of poisons are things that I am unable to match. However, it is still very difficult for me to believe that the soul of the founder is in you. On top of that, this matter has huge implications as well... If it is convenient for you, can you allow me to use my Primordial Spirit to peer into your

soul? Once I confirm that you possess the Poison Soul Constitution, I will kowtow and ask for your forgiveness!" Poison Master Bai hesitated for a moment before saying.

He was already eighty percent convinced that the other party was the founder, but he still needed to verify it directly in order to dispel his doubts.

After all, he knew for a fact that the founder was a lady, and the person before him was indubitably a male.

Instead of responding to his question, the middle-aged man waved his hand and said, "The Innate Poison Body is also known as the Constitution of Disaster. Wherever one went, lethal poison followed. You should have heard of this matter before."

"Yes!" Poison Master Bai nodded.

As a 7-star pinnacle poison master, he was naturally aware of the various details concerning the Innate Poison Body. The Constitution of Disaster did grant one perfect immunity to poison, but if it wasn't suppressed properly, lethal poison will leak from one's body, bringing great disaster upon one's surroundings.

"I might just be a fragmented soul, but the essence of my constitution remains. Even though Sun Qiang, whom I have deposited my soul in, does possess a strong aptitude toward poison, he is still unable to contain the prowess of my soul. As a result, the moment I entered this room, it became permeated with lethal poison. Naturally, you were also poisoned the moment you stepped in as well," the middle-aged man said.

Poison Master Bai was taken aback. "Poisoned?"

When he assessed the wine in the gourd using his Spiritual Perception earlier, he had also caught a glimpse of the surroundings. There was clearly no poisonous air or powder in the area!

Besides, if he had really been poisoned, how could he possibly be unaware of the matter? He didn't feel anything at all, so how could he have been poisoned just like that?

"You don't believe me?" The middle-aged man chuckled softly.

"It is not that I don't trust elder, but... I have spent my entire life around poisons, and I don't think that there is poison in here!" Poison Master Bai assessed the

surroundings once more and shook his head.

"You don't think that there is poison here?" The middle-aged man burst into laughter before eventually sighing. "If the poison aura emanated by the Innate Poison Body could be discovered by another that easily, how could I have become the founder of the Poison Hall, initiating an occupation that even Kong shi was fearful of?"

After saying those words, the middle-aged man snapped his fingers.

Padah!

Right after the sound echoed around the room, Poison Master Bai suddenly felt his entire body stiffening up. It felt as if a lethal poison that had lain dormant in his body all along was coming to life under the other party's control. His face paled, and a mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth. Horror and fear were reflected in his eyes.

He had been proceeding carefully ever since he entered the room, so how could he have been poisoned?

Could it be that... just as the other party said, those who possessed the Innate Poison Body would cause a calamity wherever they went, and even poison masters were no exception to the rule as well?

After retracting his poison, the middle-aged man asked nonchalantly, "Do you believe me now?"

"I... I believe you!" Poison Master Bai nodded vehemently.

If he'd still had his reservations a moment ago, at this point, he no longer had any doubts.

As a 7-star pinnacle poison master, he actually didn't even realize it when he was already fatally poisoned. Without a doubt, the other party's ability to utilize poison was far above his!

More importantly, he could sense that the poison had seeped into even the narrowest of acupoints in his body. Therefore, there was no way he could dispel it, not even with the Heavenly Aroma Detoxification Pill he had in his possession!

To remain unaware despite being fatally poisoned and completely helpless before it

after learning of the matter... This was the fearsome power that one of those possessing the Innate Poison Body harnessed!

"7-star Poison Master Bai Ting pays respect to the founder!"

Having confirmed the matter, there was no longer any need for Bai Ting to ascertain the other party's identity through his Primordial Spirit anymore, and he dared not do so either. He hurriedly kneeled on the ground and paid his respect to the other party.

"Rise." The middle-aged man waved his hand.

Naturally, the middle-aged man was Zhang Xuan, who was disguised as Sun Qiang at the moment.

Knowing that the fellow before him was a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, he knew that it was impossible for him to make the other party submit with just a few words.

Furthermore, if the other party were to still doubt him after he had explained himself and attempt to assault him while he was unguarded, there was a good chance that he might have been killed before he could even bring the Violetleaf King out.

For his own safety, he felt that he had to poison the other party first.

Thus, he intentionally feigned that he was knocking into the bookshelves so as to lure the other party to driving his zhenqi. Through doing so, he could use the Library of Heaven's Path to determine the other party's flaws and use his sharp tongue to scare the other party.

In a shocked state, it was inevitable that one would be unable to make the most rational of decisions. Through exploiting the weakness in the other party's heart, he was able to convince the other party to drink the wine.

As for everything else about the Innate Poison Body he had mentioned earlier, they were all lies.

Even though Wei Ruyan possessed the Innate Poison Body, due to the limitations of her cultivation, it was difficult for her to even kill a Saint realm expert, let alone a Saint 4-dan expert like the other party.

Needless to say, Zhang Xuan didn't possess such a mystical ability either. The reason

the other party had been poisoned was due to the gourd of wine that the other party had drunk earlier.

Of course, until Poison Master Bai had an opportunity to think this matter over, it wasn't too difficult for Zhang Xuan to mislead the other party into believing that he had been poisoned due to prolonged contact with the Innate Poison Body. As a result of that, the other party would fear him and not dare to pull anything before him.

Seeing that he had managed to win the other party over, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. After a short moment of contemplation, he said, "As a result of the fragmentation of my soul, my strength is far from what it used to be, and I have lost most of my memory as well. I am unable to contain the poison aura within me any longer, and there is a good chance that it might act up very soon. Are you aware of any solutions to resolving this problem?"

Yunmen is a point roughly where your left arm connects to your shoulder at the front.

Chapter 1008

Wei Ruyan's Treatment Method

Even after reading to the sixth floor, Zhang Xuan was still unable to find a solution for Wei Ruyan's Innate Poison Body. According to the introduction on Poison Master Bai in the Library of Heaven's Path, it was reflected that the other party was a 7-star pinnacle poison master from the headquarters. Given so, the other party had access to knowledge greater than what was contained in this Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall, so he might know some secrets regarding the matter.

Besides, it was normal for a soul to suffer from memory loss if it were to be fragmented or exist for too long. Putting aside everything else, Vicious was in the same state as well.

This point would serve to bring greater credibility to his argument, making it easier for him to win the trust of the other party.

And as expected, upon hearing those words, Poison Master Bai suddenly had an epiphany. Nodding, he contemplated for a brief moment before saying, "I have heard of those possessing the Innate Poison Body losing control of their strength and bringing calamity on the world before... However, I am not too sure how it can be suppressed either. However, Poison Master Hai has read some related materials, so he might know a thing or two about the matter."

"Poison Master Hai?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Could it be that the other party wasn't the only envoy from the headquarters?

The Library of Heaven's Path could only reflect the flaws of the individual which it came into contact with. As Poison Master Hai had never entered the Compendium Hall, Zhang Xuan had no chance to learn of the other party's existence either.

"Poison Master Hai is my companion who has accompanied here. He is a 7-star pinnacle poison master as well, and he has read many books regarding you. Perhaps, he might have a solution towards this problem!" Poison Master Bai explained.

"How many people from the headquarters have come here with you?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask.

"It's just the both of us!" Poison Master Bai dared not lie to the founder of the Poison Hall.

"Just the both of you?" Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief internally.

If it was only the both of them, this matter would still be under his control. He had already beguiled one over, so as long as he were to push a little harder, he should be able to win the trust of the other easily too.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan whipped out a gourd of fine wine and passed it over, "Invite him here. Tell him that this gourd of wine is a treat from me!"

"You are treating Poison Master Hai to a drink?" Poison Master Bai was perplexed.

"Indeed. There are some medicinal herbs contained within the medicine which might prove to be useful to you all in furthering your cultivation." Zhang Xuan nodded with an empathetic look, seemingly showing earnest concern for his junior.

"It is useful in furthering one's cultivation? Then why would I..." Poison Master Bai was taken aback.

"Are you wondering why the wine is ineffective on you even though you have drunk it?" Seemingly seeing through the other party's thoughts, Zhang Xuan said.

"This..." Having his thoughts pointed out, Poison Master Bai's face flushed in embarrassment.

He had already drunk the wine, but he hadn't felt any boost in his cultivation at all. However, as a junior, he wasn't in a position to question the other party's decisions.

"All medicinal herbs only work upon reaching a certain dosage. You have only drunk two mouthfuls, so naturally, the effects on you are minimal. As long as you drink a few more mouthfuls, the effects will become apparent to you."

Smiling, Zhang Xuan adopted an unfathomable image.

"Drink a few more mouthfuls?" Poison Master Bai was taken aback for a moment

before nodding in agreement.

Indeed. Most medicinal herbs only worked their wonders after reaching a certain dosage. Considering that Zhang Xuan had only drunk two mouthfuls, it was inevitable that the effects would be not apparent.

With such thoughts in mind, he raised the wine gourd, which the other party had passed him a moment ago, and lifted it up. 'Gudong! Gudong!', the other party drank more than a dozen mouthfuls.

For one of their cultivation realm, as long as they didn't intend to get drunk, ordinary alcohol were ineffective on them.

After drinking, Poison Master Bai closed his eyes. As expected, a surge of warm energy began flowing out from his abdomen, headed towards his Yuanshen acupoint.

For several centuries, he had used all kinds of methods to attempt to break open his Yuanshen acupoint, only for his efforts to end in futility eventually. At this moment, when he felt the surge of warm energy flowing over, he began drawing the strength within his body towards the Yuanshen acupoint too. With a light knock, 'jiya', the seal on his Yuanshen acupoint actually shook.

"This..." Poison Master Bai's breathing hastened, and he nearly leaped up in agitation.

For someone of his level of cultivation, it was apparent what the shaking meant.

The seal of his Yuanshen acupoint was loosening! In other words, as long as he were to persevere on in the future, there might be a chance that he would be able to knock it open!

To think that a gourd of fine wine would actually achieve what his centuries of effort was unable to do, wasn't this wine a little too formidable?

"Is it effective?" Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan spoke in a leisurely yet unfathomable voice.

"Thank you, founder!" Poison Master Bai replied in agitation, awed by what he had just experienced.

After feeling the benefits the fine wine had towards him personally, he harbored no

longer any doubts towards the gourd of wine anymore.

"Alright, you can leave now. I will be heading to the seventh floor now. Have Poison Master Hai drink the wine and look for me later on." Seeing that he had won the other party's trust, Zhang Xuan waved his hands casually and dismissed the other party.

"Yes!" Hurriedly nodding, Poison Master Bai left excitedly.

To him, this journey had brought him great rewards. Not only was he able to ascertain Sun Qiang's real identity, he was even able to reignite his confidence and obtain a mystical gourd of wine from the founder which could very well become the key for him to achieve a breakthrough in the future.

After sensing that the other party had left, Zhang Xuan waited for a moment longer before opening his eyes and standing up.

Beguiling a 7-star pinnacle poison master was no easy task, but it was fortunate that everything had gone smoothly.

The reason why he was able to fool the other party wasn't because the other party was too foolish, but that the effects of the Library of Heaven's Path and Heaven's Path zhenqi were simply too inconceivable, and Zhang Xuan had utilized them perfectly to catch the other party off guard.

On top of that, disguise had always been his forte. If he wished to, not even a 7-star master teacher could see through his disguise. Fooling a 7-star poison master wasn't anything much in comparison!

"Alright, hurry in..."

Knowing that it would take some time before Poison Master Hai arrived, Zhang Xuan decided to head straight for the seventh floor to gather the books first.

The books on the seventh floor were clearly much fewer, consisting of around a few thousand books. With a quick sweep of his gaze through the room, he collected all of them into his head.

After which, he sat onto the floor and began scanning through all of the books he had just collected. Not too long later, he shook his head with disappointment on his face.

There were at least a dozen books which had records on the Innate Poison Body, but they were extremely vague. Most of them only elaborated on how powerful the constitution was, but there was nothing about how one could control the poison aura and prevent it from leaking into the surroundings.

In other words, even after reading all of the books, he still hadn't found a solution to resolving Wei Ruyan's present condition.

"It seems like it will be impossible for me to find a solution directly through the records. I will just have to research it on my own..." Even though Zhang Xuan was disappointed, he didn't despair.

With all of the books regarding poison in the Library of Heaven's Path, there was no doubt that his comprehension of poison could reach at least 7-star pinnacle after he studied all of them, putting him on par or even beyond Poison Master Bai.

With such deep mastery in the Way of Poisons, he would be able to deduce plausible treatment methods for Wei Ruyan's condition.

But of course, to internalize all of the knowledge he had learnt and raise his understanding of poison from 3-star to 7-star, it would take several hours. Before then, he should listen to whatever Poison Master Hai had to say first.

Thus, Zhang Xuan sat down and began to wait. Not too long later, Poison Master Bai returned with an old man following behind him.

The old man was even taller than Poison Master Bai, and the aura around him was overwhelming. He was a powerful Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert as well.

At this moment, the other party was looking at him deferentially, without much of a doubt in his eyes. Most likely, he must have already heard about the matter from Poison Master Bai.

It seemed like the other party had deep trust in Poison Master Bai's judgement. This was definitely for the best. He would be spared from the effort of putting on another act to convince the other party to submit to him.

Walking up to Zhang Xuan, Poison Master Hai bowed deeply and said, "I have indeed read on a book that those possessing the Innate Poison Body can bring disaster to those around them, and vaguely, I recall seeing the treatment method for the issue on

the same book as well!

"The treatment will require the cooperation of many poison masters. A unique formation will be set up to convert the poison aura accumulated within the host's body into energy which one could utilize to achieve a breakthrough... If the treatment were to succeed, not only would the host be able to resolve the threats of the Innate Poison Body, one would also be able to advance one's cultivation by leaps and bounds!"

"Unique formation?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Do you know what kind of formation it is?"

"I am not too sure about it myself either. However, those of the headquarters are bound to have heard of it. Also, if I were to recall correctly, the collaboration of 8-star and even 9-star poison masters would be required in driving the formation!" Poison Master Hai said with a frown on his forehead.

"The collaboration of 8-star and 9-star poison masters..." Zhang Xuan's complexion darkened as a dark shadow gloomed over his eyes.

Putting aside the fact that he had nowhere to find such powerful poison masters, even if he were to find one, there was no way he would be able to beguile the other party into helping him given his current strength!

What founder or that sort, those were all nonsense! It was only through using the information detailed in the Library of Heaven's Path that he was able to induce Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai to believe in him. Such a method wouldn't work on true experts, no matter how well his acting was!

"Yes!" Poison Master Hai nodded. "Only a poison master of that caliber would be able to gather the poison aura emanated by the Innate Poison Body and complement it with various poisons so as to concoct it into something that could raise the host's cultivation swiftly. Once the process succeeds, breakthroughs will become as easy as drinking water, and the day that you return to your peak state won't be too far away as well."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though he hadn't internalized all of the books in the Library of Heaven's Path yet, he had already browsed through all of the books regarding the Innate Poison Body amongst them, granting him a deeper understanding of the matter.

With the steady consumption of poison, those possessing the Innate Poison Body would find it harder and harder to suppress the poison aura within their body. However, if there were poison masters in the area who could gather all of her poison aura together and refine it with various medicinal herbs, it could indeed become a powerful force that would allow one to achieve breakthroughs at an astounding pace.

At this point, Poison Master Hai suddenly looked at Zhang Xuan hesitantly and asked, "Founder... Are you intending on using this body to regain your strength?"

"What's wrong?" Noticing the peculiar edge in the other party's tone, Zhang Xuan frowned.

"It's nothing much, but... founder, aren't you a female? Why are you using a male body instead..." Poison Master Hai said awkwardly.

"Female?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He knew that the founder of the Poison Hall did possess the Innate Poison Body, but thinking back, he had indeed never heard whether the other party was a male or a female... No wonder Poison Master Bai would doubt his identity!

"Wait, if the founder of the Poison Hall is truly a female, this will make things even more convenient for me..." A thought flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind, and his body began trembling in agitation.

Previously, he had been thinking about how he could bring Wei Ruyan into the picture without incurring the other party's doubts. However, if the founder was a female, this would make things convenient for him.

With a light chuckle, Zhang Xuan glanced at the duo. Even though his eyes were closed, Poison Master Hai still felt as if there were a sharp pair of eyes gazing on him. "I am indeed a female. It is out of no choice that I ended up depositing my soul on Sun Qiang's body. However... I have already found a body that complements my soul perfectly. However, due to certain circumstances, I will lose consciousness once I enter the body, thus losing control of the power in my body as well... This is the reason why I came to the Poison Hall in seek of help!"

"You have found a body that complements your soul?" Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai glanced at one another, surprised by what they had just heard.

"Indeed. Not only so, my soul is currently very weak. Once I were to possess the body, it is very likely that I will lose all memories. Unless I were to return back to my peak state, otherwise the other party will still be the leading consciousness. As such, I have been hesitating, not daring to make a move easily!" Zhang Xuan sighed.

"This..." The two poison masters frowned deeply.

They had never thought that there would be such extenuating circumstances surrounding this matter.

However, considering how their founder's soul had suffered the batter of time for several dozen millenniums, it wouldn't come as a surprise regardless whatever state it was in.

Chapter 1009

Making Arrangements for Wei Ruyan

"Actually, it does not matter whether you are able to return to the body of a female or not," Poison Master Bai persuaded.

As long as one was able to continue living, what did gender matter?

Besides, there were plenty of poison masters in the Poison Hall who had their gender mixed up.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "That's what I thought at the start as well. However, this body is not compatible with my Poison Soul Constitution. At this rate, I will gradually grow weaker, and it won't take long before I am completely dead. Thus, regardless of whether I will lose my memory because of the possession or not, this is something that I will have to do. This is... my only opportunity!"

Based on what Poison Master Hai had said, it was apparent that he would require the help of the Poison Hall headquarters to help resolve Wei Ruyan's condition.

However, the Poison Hall was ultimately different from the Master Teacher Pavilion. If he were to send her there without any arrangements beforehand, there was a good chance that things could go awry.

After all, the Innate Poison Body was simply too fearsome. It was only a matter of time for a person of such a constitution to rise to the position of the head of the Poison Hall. However, how could the incumbent hall master be willing to relinquish his power so easily?

In order to prevent any accidents from happening, Zhang Xuan felt that it would be safer to give her a formidable identity first... the founder of the Poison Hall!

With such an identity protecting her, even the incumbent hall master would not dare touch her!

But of course, it was likely that Wei Ruyan would be unable to follow up with his lie

once she woke up, so there was a good chance that she might inadvertently leak the truth. As such, he had made sure to tell them in advance that she would lose her memory. As for the founder's memory returning after returning to her peak state...

Once Wei Ruyan achieved such strength, whether she had really recovered her memory or not... who would dare to utter a word against her?

Knowing that the founder was bound to have a mission for them, considering how the other party had gone through the effort of explaining this matter to them, Poison Master Bai looked at her and asked with a determined glint in his eyes, "Founder, is there anything that you need us to do? As long as it is within our means, the both of us will even brave the fires of Hell to accomplish it for you!"

Poison Master Hai also nodded grimly in agreement.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan's standing in the hearts of the two was comparable to what Kong shi was in the hearts of the master teachers. To be able to work for her was their greatest pride, and they wouldn't back down even in the face of death.

"I don't need you to brave the fires of Hell for me. However, I do have something that I need you to help me with." At this point, Zhang Xuan paused for a moment as he gazed at the duo before continuing. "I will be moving my soul into the body of a girl I have already prepared beforehand, but as soon as I do that, I will fall into an unconscious state. If... it is possible for the both of you, I hope that you can take me back to the Poison Hall headquarters and help me regain my strength as soon as possible!"

"This... Founder, rest assured. We will definitely accomplish it for you!"

They had been wondering what she would ask for, but upon hearing that this was the other party's request, the two poison masters nodded.

If the headquarters were to learn that they had found the founder and brought her back, they would surely be handsomely rewarded for their immense contribution to the Poison Hall. Thus, it could be said that this job was not only not a hassle, it could even be considered a huge opportunity for them.

"Don't be fooled into thinking that this will be an easy task!" But seemingly having seen through their thoughts, Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "After I successfully possess the other party's body, my soul will fall into a coma. This means that I will continuously emit a poisonous aura around me. If you remain in close proximity to

me, there is no doubt that you will be heavily poisoned as well!"

With grim looks on their faces, the duo straightened their posture and swore solemnly, "As long as it is a command from you, we will definitely accomplish it even if death is what we will face!"

While poison masters were not as concerned with rules and principles as master teachers, they would go to any lengths to protect their lineage and dignity.

"Don't worry, you won't face death. I will forge some pills tonight for you to ward off the poisonous aura. Once you feel like you are going to succumb to the poisonous aura, swallow one, and it should be able to neutralize the poisonous aura accumulated in your body thus far." After which, Zhang Xuan paused for a brief moment before adding, "Also, I will be imparting an even more profound poison cultivation technique and poison art to you. At the same time, I will think of a way to help the both of you achieve a breakthrough to Saint 5-dan."

"Thank you, Founder!" With their eyes widening and breathing hastening in agitation, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai hurriedly clasped their fists and bowed deeply in gratitude.

Who was the person before them?

The founder of the Poison Hall!

The other party was the person who had founded the Poison Hall, leaving behind the heritage of the poison masters. For them to actually be so privileged as to receive the guidance from a figure like the other party directly... this was something they could never have dreamed of!

"There is no need to get happy too early. To obtain my heritage, you will have to acknowledge me as your teacher. Also, in order to ensure that no accidents occur, I will have Sun Qiang control your souls. If you intend me any harm, death will fall swiftly upon you!" Zhang Xuan continued gravely.

This was not a matter of whether he trusted the other party or not. He had to ensure that not the slightest harm came to Wei Ruyan!

As the saying goes, a layer of skin conceals a human's heart.

Furthermore, a constitution as rare as the Innate Poison Body was surely desired by many.

Thus, Zhang Xuan felt that while it was imperative to offer them some benefits to them to win their loyalty, he had to also prepare some measures to ensure that the other party didn't betray him.

Knowing what the founder was worrying over, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai clasped their fists and declared affirmatively, "Founder, rest assured. Our loyalty toward you is unwavering!"

Becoming the disciple of the founder was, for a poison master, similar to becoming the disciple of Kong shi. They would possess a standing above countless poison masters, such that even if they were to encounter 9-star poison masters, the other party would have to behave obediently before them, not daring to offend or disrespect them in the least.

"There is no need for you to give me your answer that quickly. I will give you some time to consider the matter. You can give me your response at midnight today," said Zhang Xuan with a casual wave of his hands.

"This... Yes!" The duo glanced at one another before nodding.

"Alright. For the time being, I don't wish for anyone to learn of my matter, so make sure you keep your lips sealed. Otherwise, if the poison on the both of you isn't neutralized in time, I can promise you that you won't live past tomorrow!" Zhang Xuan said with a cold harrumph, his voice laced with threat.

The two poison masters clasped their fists and replied hurriedly. "Founder, rest assured. Not a word of this matter will come from our mouths!"

"Un. You are dismissed!" After saying his piece, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and fell silent.

Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai turned around and left.

After the both of them left, Zhang Xuan slowly opened his eyes once more.

If the both of them could achieve breakthroughs and become 8-star poison masters, Wei Ruyan would be in a much safer position in their care.

After sorting out the books in his head and compiling them into the respective Heaven's Path Poison Art manuals, Zhang Xuan slowly made his way out of the Compendium Hall.

At this moment, Elder Xu, Ruo Qingyuan, and the others were waiting outside. Upon seeing that Zhang Xuan had left the Compendium Hall, they hurriedly relayed orders to their men to prepare a banquet to host him.

After feasting at the banquet, Zhang Xuan was shown to a new, grander accommodation. As soon as he was left alone, he entered the Myriad Anthive Nest and began reading through the Heaven's Path Poison Art.

The reason he had told the other party to return at midnight was because he hadn't internalized these books yet. There was no way he could offer guidance to the both of them in his current state.

Starting from the 3-star Heaven's Path Poison Art, he gradually moved on to the 4-star, 5-star...

Cultivating as he read, his understanding of poison widened and deepened significantly.

After some time, he exhaled a mouthful of turbid gas. A sharp but sinister shimmer flickered across Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Immense knowledge regarding poisons ranging from 3-star to 7-star was now imprinted deeply in his brain, becoming his own capability.

At this moment, in terms of comprehension of poison, even Poison Master Bai would be no match for him. He might even be a match for some 8-star poison masters!

Of course, due to his lacking cultivation, it would be impossible for him to take the 8-star poison master examination at the moment. In fact, even the 7-star emblem, which Ruo Qingyuan had applied for on his behalf, was only at 'quasi 7-star'.

While poison master was considered a Lower Nine Paths occupation, there was still a strict cultivation requirement on rank promotion, just like most Upper Nine Paths occupations such as master teacher and beast tamer.

To become a real 7-star poison master, one's cultivation had to be at Saint 2-dan

Spiritual Perception realm at the very minimum. To become an 8-star poison master, the requirement was for one to possess the cultivation of Saint 5-dan. This was a fixed requirement, and there was no one who had the authority to alter the rules.

However, Zhang Xuan wasn't bothered by his poison master ranking.

The main reason the Poison Hall was so strict on the cultivation requirement on rank promotion was due to the risks in concocting higher-grade poisons. Without a sufficiently high cultivation, a poison master could very well injure themselves or die as a result of attempting to concoct something beyond their current strength.

However, possessing the Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan was impervious to all poison, so such a problem didn't apply to him.

Of course, this didn't mean that cultivation wasn't important to a poison master who was impervious to poison. Even if a poison master could concoct the most potent poison in the world, if they weren't strong enough to plant the poison on their opponent, it would be futile too.

Taking the current Zhang Xuan for example, the Heaven's Path zhenqi was indubitably an extremely frightening poison. However, to poison a Saint 4-dan expert to death, he still had to rely on disguising himself and tricking the other party to consume it of their own accord. With his current strength, it was impossible for him to beat his zhenqi into his opponent's body directly.

This was also why it was still very dangerous for him to confront a Saint 4-dan directly.

Just the ability to concoct poison wasn't enough. Being able to utilize it against one's opponent to subdue him was what made a true expert!

Despite everything I have learnt, I still cannot come up with a treatment method to resolve Wei Ruyan's condition. However, with my current means, I should still be able to stabilize her condition for around half a year to a year. With this period of time, it should suffice for her to make the journey to the Poison Hall headquarters! Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Even though the Heaven's Path Poison Art he had compiled from the books in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall contained incomparably deep and profound knowledge, greatly benefiting him, it still didn't grant him the capability to solve the complications regarding the Innate Poison Body.

However, while he was unable to cure the root of the problem, he was more than capable of delaying the worsening of the condition.

Standing up, Zhang Xuan walked up to Wei Ruyan. He began driving the Heaven's Path zhenqi in his body, turning it into lethal poison.

It was futile to deal with the Innate Poison Body using nourishment medicinal herbs that reinforced one's foundation. The only thing that worked was poison!

Back then, Wei Changfeng had been aware of the details regarding the matter, and Wei Ruyan's unique constitution hadn't awakened entirely either, so no one was any wiser about her condition. Out of concern for his daughter's condition, Wei Changfeng had been feeding her all kinds of medicinal herbs ever since she was young, but this had only served to worsen her affliction. Had Wei Ruyan not met him, she would have long succumbed to her affliction.

Taking a deep breath, a grim look surfaced in Zhang Xuan's eyes. Maneuvering his fingers adeptly as if he was playing the pipa 1, he nimbly shot surges of his lethal Heaven's Path zhenqi into each and every acupoints all over Wei Ruyan's body.

Shortly after these surges of zhenqi seeped into Wei Ruyan's body, her pale face began to gradually regain a slightly red glow.

Even though she was still unable to regain her consciousness, she was finally in a safe and stable condition, at least in the short-term.

Knowing that the other party would be fine for around a year, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a thought, he drew his soul out of his glabella.

"Soul Guiding Art!"

After which, his massive soul began forming several hand seals, and before long, he succeeded in severing a fragment of his soul. That fragmented soul dove straight into Wei Ruyan's glabella.

This student of his had been ill as long as she could remember. Living under the protection of her father's wings, she had an innocent personality that was incapable of scheming against others. If she were to head into the Poison Hall headquarters, a place where even master teachers would tremble in fear before, without any protection, she would surely have a layer of her skin shed at minimum.

Thus, after much consideration, Zhang Xuan decided to leave a fragment of his soul with the other party to assist her in times of need.

After that was done, he fell into deep contemplation once more. He hesitated for a brief moment before eventually taking out the only golden page that he had left. With a tap of his finger, he sent it into the other party's glabella.

This was the golden page that had formed when School Head Jiang Qingqin acknowledged him as his teacher. All along, he couldn't bring himself to use it. However, if it could be exchanged for the safety of his student, he was more than willing to do so.

After doing so, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before moving his soul back into his physical body.

What Zhang Xuan had left was just a mindless soul fragment made up purely of intent, on top of which, there had been an exchange of soul essence between the both of them before. As such, Wei Ruyan's body didn't instinctively reject Zhang Xuan's soul fragment. It dove into the other party's mind, hiding itself in the depths of the other party's consciousness. Even the strongest of person wouldn't be able to sense the presence of his soul. In fact, as long as Zhang Xuan willed it so, this student of his wouldn't be aware of the matter either.

The concern that a teacher had for their students need not be made known to the student. The only thing that teachers expected from their students was for them to better themselves, and that was why they could push on despite being misunderstood or unappreciated by their students. As long as their efforts could help the latter and help them achieve greatness, they would feel relieved and gladdened from the bottom of their hearts.

This was not foolishness. This was because there was a single belief that was even heavier than the greatest of mountains in the world driving them...

They are teachers!

Chapter 1010

Death of the Hall Master

Being a teacher was a responsibility, as well as a set of principles that one had sworn to abide by.

From the moment he comprehended the Heart of the Teacher, the true meaning of being a teacher had been imprinted deep in Zhang Xuan's mind, and he had never forgotten about it, not even for the briefest moment.

And at this point, he had indeed displayed it through his own actions.

To his direct disciples, he would impart whatever he felt would benefit them without any reservations ¹, achieving the true essence of 'selflessness in teachings'.

After settling Wei Ruyan, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out two bottles of foundation reinforcing nourishment pills. With a tap of his finger, he infused several surges of Heaven's Path zhenqi into it.

Typically speaking, the consumption of these pills shouldn't have any effects on a Saint 4-dan expert. However, with his Heaven's Path zhenqi infused into it, it was no longer an ordinary pill; it had become a divine medicine that could cure any injury and neutralize all poisons.

Furthermore, as the zhenqi was deposited into a nourishment pill, it would be nurtured by it, thus allowing to exist for extended periods of time outside of Zhang Xuan's body without dissipating.

This was dissimilar to when he infused his Heaven's Path zhenqi into a wine gourd.

Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. Each jade bottle has ten pills. It should be enough for the duo to make the journey to the Poison Hall and overcome whatever challenges come their way!

These pills were prepared for Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai. Since Zhang Xuan had decided to have them protect Wei Ruyan, he had to ensure that they wouldn't

be poisoned to their deaths.

After doing all of that, Zhang Xuan took out an empty book and brush, and wrote out a manual on a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Poison Art. After which, he contemplated over Poison Master Bai's condition for a moment and tailored a unique formula to resolve the issues the other party was facing. Only then did he finally back out from his Anthive Nest and return to the courtyard of his accommodation.

With everything he had been up to, it was already night by the time he returned. Despite the immense quantity of zhenqi he wielded, he still couldn't help but feel exhausted.

Sitting on the ground, he drove the Heaven's Path Divine Art for several cycles before he finally recuperated from his weakness. Shortly after he was done, he heard knocking at his door.

It was midnight!

"Come in."

Right after those words were spoken, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai pushed the door open and walked in.

Kneeling on the ground, they began speaking with unwavering resolution in their eyes. "Founder, we have made up our minds. We are willing to undertake this mission!"

"Un. Since you have decided to aid me, I won't treat you poorly!" Zhang Xuan nodded, having known already that the other party would make such a choice. He accepted the parts of their souls they had offered before flicking his wrist to whip out the pills and cultivation technique manuals that he had prepared beforehand.

As soon as they laid their eyes upon the manuals, the breathing of the duo hastened.

As Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts who had been cultivating poison cultivation techniques ever since they were young, they could tell that despite the simplicity of the secret manual before their eyes, it was directed toward the very essence of the Way of Poison. If they were to follow the manual, it would be a walk in the park for them to successfully concoct and control a grade-8 poison!

Of course... the prerequisite was that he had to achieve a breakthrough in his

cultivation first!

"Bai Ting, this is the cultivation technique I have specially prepared for you beforehand. It can help you resolve the problem of your blocked Yuanshen acupoint. Cultivate strictly to it, and you will be able to achieve a breakthrough very soon!"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan passed a secret manual over.

Without a Saint 4-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, he couldn't impart a cultivation technique to the other party and allow him to achieve a breakthrough immediately. However, through the Library of Heaven's Path, he could still analyze the other party's flaws and design a solution to resolving the issue.

In simple terms, the secret manual that he had just passed to Poison Master Bai didn't contain a cultivation technique but a treatment method tailored to the other party's condition.

As long as the other party cultivated according to the manual, the issue of his sealed Yuanshen acupoint would be resolved. Once that impediment was gone, considering the massive accumulation from cultivating diligently over many years, the other party would be able to achieve an instantaneous breakthrough.

After instructing Bai Ting to cultivate it properly, Zhang Xuan turned to Poison Master Hai and said, "Hai Jinming, execute a fist art!"

Knowing that the other party was going to offer him personal guidance too, Hai Jinming hurriedly executed a battle technique.

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path. After studying it carefully, Zhang Xuan fell into deep contemplation to deduce a feasible solution before imparting it to the other party verbally.

As he was facing the duo with his eyes closed, it would be troublesome for him to write it down on paper. Thus, he decided to impart it verbally instead.

On the other hand, after hearing the content that Zhang Xuan was speaking of, Hai Jinming couldn't help but be astonished and impressed at the same time.

Just a single fist, and the other party was already able to see through the flaws and problems in his cultivation. In less than an incense's time 2 , the other party had

already tailored a cultivation technique. Most probably, only the founder of the Poison Hall, who had been able to stand toe-to-toe with Kong shi in battle, would be capable of such an incredible feat!

Boom!

Before the sky even lit up, a resounding buzz echoed in the air. Bai Ting's body jolted, and an immense Primordial Spirit floated out from his body, bringing radiance to the surroundings. Its presence carried a domineering pressure on those standing before it.

Saint 5-dan, Leaving Aperture realm!

Leaving Aperture realm was the cultivation realm where a cultivator would be able to draw their Primordial Spirit out through an aperture in their body and roam the world freely. Even if their body were to meet with demise, they would still be able to exist as a Primordial Spirit. While the cultivator's lifespan would be significantly reduced existing in such a form, it was nevertheless an extremely incredible ability.

More importantly, one's Primordial Spirit would be further aligned with nature and the world, allowing it to draw even greater fighting prowess.

Every single cultivator who had reached this level wielded destructive fighting prowess that instilled deference and horror in others. It was also the fundamental requirement to reaching 8-star in most occupations, thus standing among the ranks of the top of the continent.

Not too long after Poison Master Bai made a breakthrough, the surrounding spiritual suddenly flurried once more, and Poison Master Hai's Primordial Spirit broke out from his body as well.

After cultivating the method that Zhang Xuan had tailored specifically for them, they were able to achieve breakthroughs back to back.

Retracting their Primordial Spirits back into their bodies, they walked up to Zhang Xuan and bowed deeply. At this moment, they were left with nothing but deep respect for the other party.

Even 9-star poison masters would be unable to resolve their conditions so easily and allow them to achieve a breakthrough so quickly, but the person before them had

actually managed to achieve such a feat. Who else could the other party be other than the founder?

"Alright, stand guard for me outside. Don't allow anyone to interrupt me, and you aren't to peek either!" Ignoring the looks of admiration of the duo, Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"Yes!" The two poison masters quickly backed out of the room. After which, Zhang Xuan swiftly set up an isolation barrier to prevent anyone who peering in before putting Wei Ruyan out.

After which, he waited patiently for daybreak before removing the formation and indicating for Bai Ting and Hai Jinming to enter.

"Poison masters!"

At this moment, even though Zhang Xuan still looked the same as ever, his cultivation and aura were only at the level of a Nascent Saint. At the same time, his eyes were also filled with innocence and purity, devoid of the domineering air of a conqueror from before.

Knowing that the soul of the founder had already left his body, the duo sighed internally as they clasped their fists to greet the man before them.

"Un. This is her... new body. You must make sure to accomplish the mission she has assigned to you!" Zhang Xuan said as he gestured toward Wei Ruyan.

"Rest assured, we will definitely have it done!" Nodding, the duo turned their gazes to Wei Ruyan, and a moment later, their faces reddened in agitation. "C-could it be... this young lady possesses the Innate Poison Body?"

"There is no doubt about it! Otherwise, there is no way she would be able to contain the poisonous soul of our ancestor!"

At this moment, Wei Ruyan's constitution had already been awakened, and she was continuously emanating a poisonous aura. As 7-star pinnacle poison masters, it was natural that they were able to recognize it.

They had been thinking that their founder had been forced to choose a random body to contain her soul, but who would have thought that the latter would have actually

managed to find an Innate Poison Body! They could already imagine the great heights the Poison Hall could very well be brought to under the leadership of the powerful founder. Gone would be the days where they were forced to hide in the shadows of the world, as if rats scampering on the streets.

"Founder has said that you should leave this area and head to the Poison Hall headquarters as soon as possible. While her possession was successful, she has fallen into a deep coma as a result of that. She must be treated as soon as possible, and not even the slightest delay is acceptable!" Zhang Xuan instructed grimly.

Poison Master Bai nodded. "Our purpose here is to obtain a booklet from two thousand years ago. We have already instructed Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan to fetch it yesterday, so it should be arriving very soon. As soon as we obtain that item, we will leave immediately!"

Fetching the booklet from the Mausoleum of Hall Masters shouldn't take too much effort, so it was unlikely that it would take too long.

"Booklet?" Zhang Xuan asked with a doubtful look.

"Un. It is a booklet regarding an ancient domain in Firesource City. There are rumors going around saying that it will open very soon. Thus, the headquarters sent us here to procure it in the hope that we might find something from it!" Poison Master Bai said.

Even though the founder's soul was no longer in the other party, their souls were still under the other party's control, so they dared not conceal anything from the other party.

The booklet is concerning an ancient domain in Firesource City? Could it be... the map? Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

A while ago, he had heard from a message left behind by the old principal in the Mausoleum of Principals that there was a map of the ancient domain that was in the hands of the Poison Hall. It seemed like these two poison masters were here for it as well.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan asked, "Regarding the booklet you are speaking of, can you allow me to take a look at it after you obtain it? I won't even touch the booklet open, if that bothers you!"

As long as it was a book, the Library of Heaven's Path could replicate it perfectly just by laying his eyes on it. Even touch wasn't required anymore.

"Of course..." Poison Master Bai nodded.

The other party was a poison master as well, not to mention, he was also the first body that the founder had possessed. Besides, his life was held in the other party's hands. Putting aside taking a look at the booklet, even if the other party wanted to take it away, he wouldn't dare object to it.

"You have my gratitude." Smiling, Zhang Xuan was in the midst of his words when the ground abruptly shook violently. A dull rumbling echoed in the distance, as if something had collapsed.

"What is happening?" Alarmed, the trio hurriedly flew out of the room and turned their gazes in the direction that the uproar had come from. Taking a closer look, they noticed that a powerful shockwave had emanated from a mountain not too far away. It seemed like there were two powerful experts clashing with one another.

"That is the might of a Saint 4-dan expert," Poison Master Bai remarked with a deep frown.

"That is... where the Mausoleum of Hall Masters is! Quick, let's head over to take a look!"

The strongest expert in the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall was Ruo Qingyuan, who only possessed the cultivation of Saint 3-dan pinnacle. For the might of a Saint 4-dan to burst forth in the Poison Hall, it was apparent that something must have happened!

And most important of all, the ruckus originated from the Mausoleum of Hall Masters!

That was where the booklet was stored!

Sou! Sou! Sou!

With incomparably fast speed, it took merely the blink of an eye for them to arrive at the Mausoleum of Hall Masters. At this moment, the entire building had already collapsed. Vice Hall Master Xu and the others were standing not too far away with anxious looks on their faces.

"What happened?" Poison Master Bai asked.

"Reporting to Poison Master Bai, I am not too sure either. Last night, our hall master said that he was going to the Mausoleum of Hall Masters to retrieve something, and he instructed us to wait here. But despite waiting for so long, he still hasn't returned yet," Vice Hall Master Xu said with dread.

"He still hasn't returned yet? There is no doubt about it, something must have happened to him. Let's hurry in to take a look!" Frowning, Poison Master Bai rushed into the Mausoleum of Hall Masters without any hesitation.

Poison Master Hai and Zhang Xuan followed closely behind.

Upon seeing them enter, Vice Hall Master Xu and the others hesitated for a moment before clenching their jaws and following them in as well.

According to the rules, the Mausoleum of Hall Masters could only be accessed by the incumbent hall master of the branch. Despite being esteemed elders, they were unqualified to enter the premises. However, in the face of such a major crisis, they could only forgo conventions for the time being.

Upon entering, the elders noted that the entire mountain slope was filled with towering and majestic tombs, and the hall masters of each generation were buried in each of them. Inscribed on the tombstones in front of the tombs were the outstanding contributions they had made to the Poison Hall.

Not too long later, they caught up with Poison Master Bai, Poison Master Hai, and 'Sun Qiang'. At this point, they had already come to a halt. Standing right before a huge depression, the trio had an awful complexion on their faces.

Following the gazes of the trio, Vice Hall Master Xu's eyes narrowed in astonishment as his face turned ghastly pale. "Hall Master..."

At the very center of the depression lay Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan, his body crimson with fresh blood.

Quickly flying over to help the Ruo Qingyuan up, Vice Hall Master Xu realized that the other party had already stopped breathing. Judging from the other party's injuries, it seemed like he had been killed with a single palm strike. In fact, it seemed like the huge depression in the ground had been caused by the same palm strike.

"Our hall master... is dead?"

The faces of the many elders paled in horror.

Chapter 1011

Earthleaf King

At this very moment, Ruo Qingyuan's heart had already stopped. His already wounded body was withered, creating the impression that his skin was just clinging off his bones. His eyes were bulging from their sockets, as if he had witnessed something horrifying. His right fist was tightly clenched around a bottle of poison, but it seemed like he hadn't had a chance to use it before he was killed.

"Is that it?"

Gazing at the scene from above, Poison Master Bai seemed to have noticed something from examining the corpse, so he turned to Poison Master Hai to seek his opinion on the matter.

"Yes, it seems so..." The latter nodded his head grimly.

"Exactly what I thought!" Poison Master Bai narrowed his eyes, and with a tone that felt as sharp as a knife, dripping with bone-chilling killing intent, he spat, "The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe..."

Upon hearing those words, Zhang Xuan frowned. "You are saying that... Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan was killed by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?"

While the reputation of poison masters wasn't good, they hadn't sided with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe entirely back during the war, and they hadn't been in contact with them ever since. Otherwise, no matter how deep the Poison Hall had hidden, the Master Teacher Pavilion would surely have found and eradicated them completely.

Considering that they hadn't been in contact, it was bizarre that an Otherworldly Demon would suddenly appear here and even kill a hall master. What was going on?

Furthermore, hearing the other party's tone, it seemed as if they had already confirmed the matter.

Poison Master Bai nodded as he explained, "Hall Master Ruo's corpse is withered; this shows that his blood essence has been sapped dry. That is an ability that only the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe possesses."

"His blood essence was sapped dry?" Activating his Eye of Insight, he turned his gaze toward Hall Master Ruo's corpse once more to examine it, and his complexion turned incredibly awful.

Just as the other party had said, the hall master's blood essence had indeed been devoured by something. It was extremely horrifying.

Blood essence was the foundation of a human's vitality. For it to have been forcefully sapped dry, the excruciating pain that Hall Master Ruo had suffered in the process was unimaginable. This was an extremely vicious method of murdering another!

"This is the offensive means of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

While he had faced quite a number of Otherworldly Demons to date, more often than not, he had been able to kill his opponent before the other party had been able to make a move against him. As such, he didn't really have much of an understanding regarding the callous means utilized by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. However, in the moment that he saw the corpse of Hall Master Ruo, he finally understood why the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was so deeply feared by all of the races, including the humans.

To sap all of a person's blood essence was no different from eradicating one's existence. No proficiency in the Way of Medicine could bring back a man who had lost his blood essence.

A thought flashed across Poison Master Bai's mind, and he exclaimed in astonishment, "The Otherworldly Demons must be here to snatch the booklet!"

For an Otherworldly Demon to have struck the moment Ruo Qingyuan entered the Mausoleum of Hall Masters to retrieve the booklet... it couldn't possibly have been a coincidence.

Hearing Poison Master Bai's analysis, Poison Master Hai nodded grimly in agreement as a sharp glint flashed across his eyes. "Considering that we heard Ruo Qingyuan's voice not too long ago, it is apparent that it hasn't been long since he was killed. Most

likely, the murderer should still be in the vicinity. If we give chase right now, we might still be able to catch up with that scoundrel."

Right after saying those words, Poison Master Hai immediately scanned his surroundings with an intent gaze, seemingly trying to make out the location of the fleeing Otherworldly Demon. A moment later, he shook his head helplessly.

The Otherworldly Demon might have fled hurriedly right after killing Hall Master Ruo in a single strike, but he had also made sure to erase his trail so that no one would be able to follow him easily. Considering how big the island was and how powerful the Otherworldly Demon seemed to be, it would be impossible for them to catch up with the other party if they were to get the direction wrong at first.

"Let me take a look!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes as he began scanning the surroundings.

They had rushed over at top speed right after hearing the commotion, but typically speaking, there shouldn't have been time for the Otherworldly Demon to get too far away.

As long as the Otherworldly Demon hadn't left the island yet, it would be possible to catch up with and subdue the other party with the strength that Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai's possessed, allowing them to exact vengeance for Hall Master Ruo.

Studying the depression carefully with the Eye of Insight, it didn't take long for a faint trail to appear in Zhang Xuan's sight.

"The Otherworldly Demon went that way!" Zhang Xuan pointed.

"That way?"

Upon seeing the direction that Zhang Xuan was pointing at, Poison Master Bai and the others couldn't help but be perplexed.

The direction pointed was the very direction they had come from.

On their way to the Mausoleum of Hall Masters, they hadn't seen anyone escaping. Furthermore, considering that they were in the base of the Poison Hall, shouldn't the assassin have been trying everything in his means to escape at this very moment? To

be heading to the heart of their base at this very moment instead of fleeing, wasn't the other party courting death?

It was not that they were unwilling to trust this 'Sun Qiang' person, but without the will of the founder, the other party was a mere Nascent Saint cultivator. It was indeed a little difficult to believe that he was capable of tracking down the trail of a Saint 4-dan expert when even a Saint 5-dan expert like Poison Master Hai was helpless before the matter.

"Follow me!"

The booklet could very well disappear forever should they allow the murderer to escape with it. Knowing that there was no time for an explanation, he hurriedly beckoned the others to follow him before flying in the direction of the trail.

Seeing how affirmative the other party was, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai decided to toss aside their doubts for the moment and hurriedly pursued 'Sun Qiang'.

Not too long after leaving the Mausoleum of Hall Masters, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt. He scanned his surroundings carefully, and a deep frown emerged on his forehead.

The Otherworldly Demon was extremely cunning. There had still been a trail a moment ago, but it had abruptly disappeared at this point. Even through his Eye of Insight, there was no sign of the other party anywhere.

However, this sufficed to show that the Otherworldly Demon didn't have any time to get away yet and could very well be hiding in the area.

"Where is he?"

The surroundings were mainly flat. There were a couple of low-lying buildings and miscellaneous plants scattered around the area, but from the sky, it was possible to catch a bird's eye view of everything easily. If the other party was truly in the area, there was nowhere he could hide himself.

"Unless..." Zhang Xuan lowered his head as his eyes narrowed.

Since the other party was neither in the sky nor on the ground, that only left a single possibility... the other party was underground!

However, there was not a hole to be found on the ground. There didn't seem to be any way they could get into the ground to pursue the other party.

Noticing Zhang Xuan directing a doubtful gaze on the ground, Poison Master Bai walked up to him and asked, "What? Are you suspecting that the Otherworldly Demon is hiding underground?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "The trail ends right here. Other than underground, I cannot think of anywhere else."

"This isn't a difficult problem to resolve. To know whether the other party is underground or not, we just have to check it a little," Poison Master Bai replied.

In the next moment, a brilliant glow emanated from his Yuanshen acupoint as a figure that shared the same facial features as Poison Master Bai slipped out from it.

Separation of the Primordial Spirit from the physical body!

With a light movement, Poison Master Bai's Primordial Spirit slipped into the ground and disappeared from sight.

Primordial Spirits were similar to souls in many ways. Unlike physical bodies, they were capable of warping their form freely, allowing them to pass through most impediments easily. As tough as the ground was, there were still small pores in between that allowed a Primordial Spirit to slip in easily.

Hong long!

Not too long after Poison Master Bai's Primordial Spirit descended into the ground, the crowd suddenly felt the earth beneath their feet shaking violently. Following which, a figure abruptly burst out with a resounding explosion.

"Where do you think you are escaping to?"

As soon as that figure appeared, Poison Master Hai responded swiftly and charged up with a deafening bellow. Gathering immense strength in his hands, he formed a massive palm, which tore down the buildings and trees in the surroundings before it could even strike the ground.

At this moment, Poison Master Hai was already a Saint 5-dan expert. Even the most

casual of actions from him wielded the strength to move mountains and split oceans, making it hard for anyone to stand against him.

Hu!

Upon seeing the devastating attack launched by Poison Master Hai, the figure knew that he would surely die if he were to be struck by the attack. Thus, he curled himself into a bundle in the sky and descended like a streak of lightning back to the ground.

The speed he was moving at was even faster than when he had leaped out from the ground earlier.

Hula!

Falling toward the ground at such unbelievable speed, everyone thought that the figure would surely incur severe injuries upon impact. Yet, contrary to all expectations, the figure disappeared into the ground as if a water droplet falling into a pile of sand, disappearing within the soil in the blink of an eye.

"This is... the Art of Earth Traversing!" Poison Master Hai exclaimed in shock.

His strike had created a huge hole in the ground, but the enemy was nowhere to be seen. Alarmed, his eyes narrowed warily.

"Art of Earth Traversing?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully, having never heard of the name before.

"It is an ability that runs through a unique bloodline that grants one's body the ability to travel freely underground just like a Primordial Spirit, never hindered by anything in one's path." After swiftly explaining the matter to Zhang Xuan, Poison Master Hall bellowed loudly, "Bai Ting, you chase him beneath. I will wait above and strike him as soon as he surfaces. No matter what, we can't allow that fellow to escape!"

"Alright!" Beneath the ground, Poison Master Bai's voice sounded.

Moving in the form of his Primordial Spirit, he could travel freely through the pores of the earth. With two Saint 5-dan experts collaborating with one another, one working on the surface and the other one beneath the ground, it would be impossible for the enemy to escape even if he possessed the ability to traverse through earth freely!

Boom boom boom!

A series of intense tremors struck the area, and various buildings in the area fell easily as if they were simply piles of hay. Examining the situation from the sky, Zhang Xuan and the others couldn't help but feel as if there were two mighty dragons clashing with one another beneath the ground, creating huge shockwaves through the ground with each blow they traded.

Huge cracks emerged on the surface, and they swiftly crept along the surface, covering more and more ground. A turbid gush of smoke burst forth from a couple of these cracks, and the temperature in the area rose. Soon, the smoke dissipated to reveal flurrying lava within the cracks.

Poison Master Bai had barely made the breakthrough to Saint 5-dan just a moment ago, so he was still unable to control his strength perfectly. It was one thing to battle in the sky, but to clash beneath the ground... This was indubitably bringing a catastrophe upon the Poison Hall!

If the battle between Zhang Xuan's physical body and Hall Master Ruo had resulted in the loss of precious historical architecture of the Poison Hall, the battle between Poison Master Bai and the Otherworldly Demon would be no different from bringing utter ruination upon the Poison Hall!

The trembling earth felt as if a massive beast had come to life, reducing innumerable exquisitely designed buildings to rubble.

Sou!

After a long period of time, a figure finally darted out of the earth once more. This time, his movement wasn't as nimble as before. As soon as he appeared, he spurted a mouthful of blood, and he crashed heavily to the ground.

Poison Master Hai, who had been waiting patiently outside for the prey to be driven over to his side, swiftly spread open his fingers and grabbed forward. Numerous surges of zhenqi crossed with one another to form a firm cage around the figure, sealing the other party's movements.

"As expected, it really is an Otherworldly Demon!" At this point, Zhang Xuan finally got a clear look at the other party's appearance, and a deep frown surfaced on his forehead.

The other party bore some semblance to the Goldenleaf King and the other Otherworldly Demon Kings he had killed before. On top of that, the other party emanated a sharp aura, which clearly revealed his Saint 4-dan cultivation.

The Violetleaf King discreetly sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan discreetly from the Myriad Anthive Nest. "Young Master, that person is the Earthleaf King! He is also one of the Ten Great Kings of our Qingtian Lineage. His fighting prowess might be beneath mine, but he possesses the ability of earth traversing, allowing him to easily escape from any crises. He is our most capable scout!"

The Violetleaf King was a Saint 4-dan expert, so as long as Zhang Xuan permitted him to, the other party could easily extend his Spiritual Perception beyond the Myriad Anthive Nest to detect what was happening in the area.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask, "Earthleaf King? Another one of the Ten Great Kings? Why would he be here?"

He seemed to be meeting the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage everywhere he went. So far, he had already encountered half of them, and he had successfully killed or forced them to submit to him thus far.

Honestly speaking, had Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai not made a breakthrough to Saint 5-dan, there was no way they would have been able to capture the other party, considering the other party's ability to travel freely underground.

After a moment of contemplation, the Violetleaf King revealed his deduction. "My guess is that the Qingtian Emperor didn't feel secure entrusting the vital mission of acquiring the map to me and the Waterleaf King, so just to be safe, he secretly sent the Earthleaf King over to carry out the mission should the both of us fail. Most likely, the fellow must have followed you and Elder Xu here!"

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was unaware of the location of the Poison Hall, or else he and the Waterleaf King wouldn't have resorted to ordering the city lord to search for the Sepulture Flower all around the city to lure an elder of the Poison Hall to them.

Thus, for the Earthleaf King to suddenly appear in the Poison Hall, chances were that he had been trailing them all along.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "That's not necessarily so. I think that it is more likely that

he might have gotten into the Poison Hall by following Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai."

Knowing that the Otherworldly Demons were after the map as well, Zhang Xuan had made sure to proceed very carefully when he left Jingyuan City. If there had been someone following him, he would have surely noticed it.

On the other hand, Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai probably didn't think that there would be anyone following them, thus creating an opening for the Earthleaf King to exploit.

Had it been anyone else, the powerful formation of the Poison Hall would have surely kept them at bay. However, considering that it was the Earthleaf King who was skilled in the Art of Earth Traversing they were talking about, the other party just might have been able to burrow his way through the formation with relative ease.

After making his way into the Poison Hall, the Earthleaf King had been camping underground, not daring to make a reckless move in fear of the retaliation of the Poison Hall. It was only when he heard that Hall Master Ruo was going to acquire the booklet alone that he secretly followed the other party, striking the moment that the other party took out the booklet.

Based on what he had planned earlier, he had thought that he would surely be able to get away easily with his ability to traverse through earth. Yet, who could have thought that Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai would suddenly make breakthroughs overnight, thus granting them the strength to corner him, rendering him incapable of escaping.

Chapter 1012

Hu Yunsheng's Horror

It might sound complicated, but it wasn't too difficult to deduce the series of events after learning of the other party's identity.

While Zhang Xuan was in the midst of conversing with the Violetleaf King, Poison Master Bai's Primordial Spirit returned to his body before walking up to the Earthleaf King. With a tap of his finger, a unique poison seeped into the other party's body.

After which, with a wintry face that was devoid of the slightest warmth, he bellowed, "Who sent you here?"

"This is bad!"

Seeing Poison Master Bai forcefully interrogating the Earthleaf King, Zhang Xuan's face immediately warped in horror, and he hurriedly rushed forward to stop the other party. However, it was already too late. The trapped Earthleaf King forcefully clamped his jaws together, and his face immediately turned extremely red.

"Hahaha, you have fallen for our ploy..." Right after saying those words, the Earthleaf King's head fell powerlessly to the side. Fresh blood spurted from his every orifice as his breathing came to a halt.

Just like the Goldenleaf King and the Greenleaf King, the Earthleaf King also had a pill that contained lethal poison in his mouth. So that they wouldn't find themselves in a position where they had no choice but to spill the secrets of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, they would bite down on the pill and commit suicide were they to be captured.

Right after learning of the assailant's identity, Zhang Xuan had busied himself trying to deduce how the other party had managed to sneak into the Poison Hall, hoping to make sense of the story. However, he didn't think that Bai Ting would use poison against the other party while his attention was away, and that became the final push that forced the Earthleaf King to commit suicide. By the time he realized, it was already too late to intervene.

The poison was extremely potent, and it brought about near immediate death to the Otherworldly Demons. Even with Zhang Xuan's 7-star proficiency in the Way of Medicine, there was no way he could bring the already deceased Earthleaf King back to life.

"He said that we have fallen for his ploy?" Poison Master Bai scoffed coldly, thinking nothing of the other party's words.

It mattered not to him whether the other party had died here or not as long as the booklet he needed to procure for his mission was still around.

Walking up, he took the other party's storage ring and searched its interior, but soon, his complexion became incredibly awful.

Noticing Poison Master Bai's expression, Poison Master Hai asked worriedly, "What's wrong?"

"The booklet isn't in here!" Poison Master exclaimed anxiously.

"It isn't in there?" Poison Master Hai was astonished.

It was just a moment ago that the Otherworldly Demon had killed Hall Master Ruo and stolen the map, and the both of them had swiftly collaborated with one another to capture him shortly after. Given the short span of time between both events, there shouldn't have been any chance for the booklet to have left the other party's possession.

"Damn it, we have really fallen for their ploy! This fellow's goal was to lure us away!" Clenching his teeth tightly together, regret could be seen in the depths of Poison Master Bai's eyes.

Poison Master Hai and the others weren't fools either. They immediately realized what was going on after hearing those words.

It seemed like the one in charge of stealing the booklet was someone else. This fellow was probably intending on giving himself away from the very start even if Zhang Xuan hadn't found his trail so as to draw all attention to him, thus creating an opportunity for his companion to escape.

It had been ten minutes since the incident occurred, and if it was exactly as Poison

Master Bai thought, the Earthleaf King's companion should have already gotten away from the Poison Hall by now. Once he entered the surrounding sea, it would be impossible to track him down anymore.

Naturally, it didn't take long for Zhang Xuan to come to the same conclusion as well. Just as his complexion turned awful, the Violetleaf King suddenly exclaimed with a trembling voice, "The culprit is probably... the Skyleaf King!"

"Skyleaf King?"

"Yes, he is the strongest of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, as well as the one who boasts of the most brilliant mind of us all! His cultivation has reached Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm primary stage. He is the only one of us all who possesses the ability to enter and flee discreetly from the Poison Hall," the Violetleaf King explained.

"Leaving Aperture realm primary stage?" Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

If that truly was the case, there was a really good chance that their deduction was true!

An expert of the Leaving Aperture realm could easily hide his physical body outside the island and sneak in with only his Primordial Spirit. Right after obtaining the map, the other party could swiftly flee without anyone noticing. Furthermore, in the form of a Primordial Spirit, the other party could move at an incredible speed, such that even a Saint 4-dan aerial saint beast would find it hard to catch up.

Not expecting for there to be such an expert among the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, Zhang Xuan hadn't thought of the possibility that his Eye of Insight might currently be too weak to uncover the enemy's trail. This had resulted in an opening for the enemy to exploit.

It seemed he would have to be more careful in the future.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan asked, "Who else is among the Ten Great Kings, and how powerful are they?"

Even though he had already taken down half of the Ten Great Kings, he still didn't have a concrete idea of who or how powerful they were so far. It sure was stifling for him to still know next to nothing about the opponents he was facing.

Of course, if the Qingtian Emperor were to learn of Zhang Xuan's current thoughts, he might just very well spurt a mouthful of blood on the spot.

Of his ten most capable subordinates, four of them had been killed through a scheme of some kind and one had ended up submitting to the enemy... and yet, the culprit behind all of it actually knew nothing about them at all.

If the culprit could already do this much despite knowing nothing about them, just what kind of calamity would befall them once the other party knew everything about them?

"The Goldenleaf, Greenleaf, Waterleaf, and Earthleaf are already dead. Other than me, the Skyleaf, Jadeleaf, Windleaf, Stoneleaf, and Fireleaf are still remaining. Of them, the Skyleaf King is the strongest of us all, and he is the head of the Ten Great Kings as well. The Jadeleaf King holds the title of being the second strongest of us all, possessing a cultivation of Half-Leaving Aperture realm. Following on are the Windleaf King, Stoneleaf King, and Fireleaf King. Each of them wields incredible might that is far beyond the rest of us. As such, they are known as the Upper Five Kings whereas the rest of us are known as the Lower Five Kings." Without any hesitation, the Violetleaf King spilled everything he knew about the Ten Great Kings.

After hearing the news, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Just dealing with the Lower Five Kings had already exposed him to grave danger on multiple occasions, but who could have thought that there would still be an Upper Five Kings above them. From the looks of it, they were determined to obtain the item in the ancient domain. Considering that they had even successfully obtained the map, there was a good chance that the humans would be placed in grave danger once the ancient domain opened once more.

Forget it, I will just have to deal with whatever comes my way!

There was no way Zhang Xuan could have predicted such a twist in the situation. At this point, there was nothing he could do anymore. The Skyleaf King had more than sufficient time to make his escape, making it nigh impossible for them to locate the other party. Taking a step back, even if they were able to find the Skyleaf King by some stroke of luck, there was no way that Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai, who had just made a breakthrough and hadn't had the opportunity to reinforce their cultivation yet, could be a match for the other party.

Less had to be said about Zhang Xuan himself.

With the Violetleaf King and the Otherworldly Demon puppets, he might still be able to subdue a Saint 4-dan expert. But against a Saint 5-dan expert... the wisest decision he could possibly make in such a situation was to flee as far as he could.

Leaving Aperture realm experts were capable of fighting with their Primordial Spirits, which made them very difficult opponents. Not only were Primordial Spirits capable of flitting through space at incredible speeds, they also wielded immense strength that made it impossible for normal cultivators to match them. Without reaching Saint 5-dan himself, it was impossible for any cultivator to face an expert of that caliber!

Master teachers prided themselves on their ability to match opponents stronger than them due to their discerning eyes, but the Leaving Aperture realm was too huge of a rift to bridge. The differences between a physical body and a Primordial Spirit were reminiscent of that between a mortal and a deity, a gap that could never be bridged.

Take Zhang Xuan's current situation for example, despite having yet to reach Saint realm, he was able to defeat Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm experts, cultivators of two whole cultivation realms higher than him.

The capability to rival opponents stronger than himself wasn't too uncommon for those beneath Saint 5-dan, albeit it was often not as exaggerated as in Zhang Xuan's case. However, even if a genius of such caliber were to reach Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle, it was unlikely that he would be able to match an ordinary Leaving Aperture realm primary stage cultivator.

Not to mention, a Leaving Aperture realm expert could flee with their Primordial Spirit even if they were no match for their opponent. Those whose cultivation had yet to reach Saint 5-dan had no way of catching up at all. Putting everything aside, just the ability to travel through the ground, those who hadn't reached Leaving Aperture realm, with the exception of those who possessed unique bloodlines like the Earthleaf King, were incapable of doing such a thing.

On top of that, Primordial Spirits need not breathe. This meant that they could enter places with harsh conditions without fear, such as venturing into the depths of the ocean, a feat that those bound by their bodies would never be able to achieve.

While Zhang Xuan was conversing with the Violetleaf King, Poison Master Bai turned

a grim look toward him and said, "The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has stolen the booklet and killed Hall Master Ruo on top of that. This matter must be reported to the headquarters immediately. Poison Master Sun, the both of us will be taking our leave first!"

Clearly, they also knew that it was unlikely that they would be unable to find the other party. It would only be a waste of time if they continued searching the area. Thus, they felt that it would be much better for them to send the founder, who was in a dangerous position at the moment, back to the headquarters first.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The hall master of the Hongyuan Empire Poison Hall had been killed; such a huge organization couldn't go without a head for too long. Thus, the crowd unanimously voted Vice Hal Master Xu as the new hall master.

Zhang Xuan handed the Sepulture Flower over the Vice Hall Master Xu and offered him guidance on the concoction of grade-7 poisons so that the latter could make a breakthrough to become a 7-star poison master. After all was done, he heaved a sigh of relief.

With his aim at the Poison Hall accomplished, there was no longer any need for him to remain in the area. Thus, he stood up and bade everyone farewell before leaving with Poison Master Bai and Poison Master Hai.

The aerial saint beast that Poison Master Bai travelled on was extremely swift. In less than a day, Zhang Xuan had already returned to Jingyuan City.

After alighting from the saint beast, Zhang Xuan made the two poison masters promise him once more that they would put everything they had into protecting Wei Ruyan before he was willing to let them leave.

Students would eventually leave their teachers; Wei Ruyan was no exception to the rule.

Even the most ferocious of eagles would never be able to mature if it were to live under the protection of another its entire life, deprived of the opportunity to fly independently in the azure sky.

It was the same for students.

This was precisely the reason Zhang Xuan had allowed his students to leave him one after another despite his reluctance.

First Zhao Ya and Lu Chong, followed by Yuan Tao, and now, it was Wei Ruyan's turn.

Zheng Yang would also likely head to the Combat Master Hall eventually, which meant that five out of his seven direct disciples had already left him.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan made his way back into Inkcloud Quarter once more.

It didn't take him long before he met Hu Yunsheng, and the latter informed him that the Master Teacher Pavilion and Hongyuan royal family had already dispatched some men the previous day to seal the City Lord Manor for investigation purposes.

It turned out that the city lord's only son was held hostage by the Otherworldly Demons, leaving the city lord no choice but to obey their commands.

Nevertheless, it was unpardonable for a human to serve an Otherworldly Demon to deal with his own kind regardless of the reason. As such, the guards had apprehended the city lord, and they were currently in the midst of transporting him back to the capital, where he would be judged by Yu Shenqing personally.

Upon hearing this news, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but sigh again.

A human really shouldn't commit evil, no matter how small a sin it was. Often, it was a single wrong step that eventually led to an endless downward spiral into the abyss.

After settling the Heaven's Path zhenqi lying dormant in Hu Yunsheng's body, Zhang Xuan stood up and bade farewell. Upon finding a rural area, he summoned the Byzantium Helios Beast from the Anthive Nest and adeptly leaped onto its back. With a light stomp of his feet, the Byzantium Helios Beast soared into the sky, making its way straight toward the Master Teacher Academy was.

"Byzantium Helios Beast... A Saint realm Byzantium Helios Beast?" Watching as Zhang Xuan depart from the distance, Hu Yunsheng's body abruptly froze. In that moment, a multitude of information flashed through his mind, nearly exploding it.

Having never seen his boss acting with such indecorum before, Zhu Xiao asked doubtfully, "Boss, what's wrong?"

While Byzantium Helios Beasts were indeed rarely seen in the world, there were still a couple of them in Hongyuan Empire.

Noticing Zhu Xiao's doubts, Hu Yunsheng replied with a bitter smile, "It's true that a Byzantium Helios Beast is an extremely rare tamed beast, but... there is only one Saint realm Byzantium Helios Beast in the whole of Hongyuan Empire!"

"Only one?" Zhu Xiao was taken aback. "Boss, could it be that you have already deduced Elder Sun's real identity?"

"If my guess isn't wrong, the current form he is assuming is a disguise. His real name is... Zhang Xuan!" Hu Yunsheng replied.

"Zhang Xuan?" Zhu Xiao's body stiffened as his face turned completely pale. "You are talking about the newly-appointed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Principal Zhang?"

As an intelligence agency, Inkcloud Quarter had a lot of information regarding Zhang Xuan. Even Zhu Xiao had heard of the legends of that Principal Zhang and viewed the latter as a role model whom he would strive towards.

"Un, that's him." Hu Yunsheng nodded. "I just recalled that Principal Zhang has a butler called Sun Qiang. Furthermore, for the Master Teacher Pavilion and the royal family to come so swiftly to deal with the city lord... According to internal news, it seems like the order to do so has come directly from Principal Zhang. Putting together all of this, I would really have to be a fool to still not figure out the other party's identity!"

"This..." At this point, Zhu Xiao finally realized as well.

It truly felt like a dream. To think that Principal Zhang would personally come to Jingyuan City and even visit their Inkcloud Quarter...

"Wait a moment, Boss. If I recall correctly, you attempted to kill the other party to steal his wealth back then..."

Recalling that matter, Zhu Xiao hurriedly turned his gaze toward Hu Yunsheng, only to see the latter's face turning completely pale as veins popped out by his temples. "If you dare speak of this matter to another soul, I will definitely hunt you down and kill you!"

Thinking about the matter again, Hu Yunsheng couldn't help but feel fearful.

Who would have thought that he would actually end up trying to rob the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy? Wasn't this no different from courting death? It was fortunate that the other party was a master teacher, a reasonable person. Otherwise, he might very well have become a corpse already.

Chapter 1013

Luo Ruoxin's Request

A brilliant sun hung brightly above, and a warm breeze caressed the world.

After flying for roughly ten days on the Byzantium Helios Beast, the massive outline of Hongyuan City gradually came into view.

Within the ten days, Zhang Xuan had managed to internalized all of the knowledge he had learned from the Poison Hall and fused it with his current fighting style. At the same time, he had also cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher to its very peak, just a step away from breaking through to the Saint realm.

However, it was a pity that the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence was nowhere to be found at the moment, or else he would have long made a breakthrough.

I should get Sun Qiang to look into the matter...

In terms of logistical efficiency and intelligence gathering, he was nowhere on par with Sun Qiang. Thus, it was reassuring to leave it in the hands of the latter.

As long as he could find the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence, he would be able to push for a perfect breakthrough to Saint realm, thus inducing a huge leap in his fighting prowess once more.

By then, regardless of the dangers that lurked in the ancient domain, he would surely be able to deal with them easily.

Not too long later, right after the Byzantium Helios Beast landed in his manor, Sun Qiang rushed up to Zhang Xuan and reported, "Young Master, Young Master Zheng Yang has been taken away..."

"Taken away? By whom?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

"It's Combat Master Liao from the Combat Master Hall. He says that he will take Young Master Zheng Yang to participate in the Progeny of Combat Selection, or else this

matter might end up being pushed a year back," Sun Qiang replied.

"Progeny of Combat Selection?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Yes. This is the letter that Young Master Zheng Yang left for you..." After saying those words, Sun Qiang passed a letter over.

With a complicated look on his face, Zhang Xuan opened the envelope and saw a note filled with words within.

It didn't take long for him read through the entire note, and at the end of which, he couldn't help but sigh deeply.

Combat Master Liao had reported the matter concerning Zheng Yang to the headquarters, and the headquarters had instructed him to bring Zheng Yang to them at any cost to participate in the Progeny of Combat Selection. If Zheng Yang cleared the selection, he could very well inherit the heritage of the Combat God and become the next head of the Combat Master Hall!

The founder of the Combat Master Hall had been a direct disciple of Kong shi, and out of respect for the overwhelming strength he possessed, those of the Master Teacher Continent had given him a nickname—Combat God!

As long as one cleared the Progeny of Combat Selection, one would be qualified to inherit his heritage and become one of the strongest experts of the Master Teacher Pavilion or even the entire Master Teacher Continent.

It looks like he has found his own path...

To have sent two of his students away within just a short period of ten days, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little lonely within. Nevertheless, he still felt gladdened for them.

After all, they couldn't possibly remain his students for their entire lives. They would eventually have to find their paths to tread on.

If Zheng Yang could become the Combat God of this generation, the head of the Combat Master Hall... at the very least, this would mean that his teachings hadn't been in vain. As Zheng Yang's teacher, Zhang Xuan would be more than delighted to see that.

Forget it. After I am done dealing with the matters concerning the ancient domain, I should bring the members of the Xuanxuan Faction to Qingyuan Conferred Empire's Combat Master Hall for the both to interact and learn from one another. I should be able to receive updates about Zheng Yang there. With a smile, Zhang Xuan tossed aside the loneliness he felt within.

He had already promised Combat Master Liao and the others that he would take the members of the Xuanxuan Faction for a visit to the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall once they settled the affairs regarding the ancient domain at Firesource City. While the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall was only a branch, it was still possible to gather some news regarding Zheng Yang from there.

"Is there anything else other than that?"

"Young Master, the head of the Formation Master School and Blacksmith School took 10,000 students from their respective schools each to Firesource City for a mission. They set forth roughly five days ago!" Sun Qiang reported.

"Firesource City? Mission?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

It wasn't anything much for the other school heads to head to Firesource City in advance, but... due to the great implications tied in with the ancient domain, there was a need to keep the matter confidential. To mobilize twenty thousand students from the Master Teacher Academy there despite so... could it be that there had been some kind of compelling situation in Firesource City that warranted aid?

Due the grave importance of the matter, even Sun Qiang wasn't qualified to learn more about the matter. In fact, it was likely that even the students who had set forth to Firesource City were unaware of what they were going to do either.

"Is there anything else?" Zhang Xuan continued asking.

"Also... Luo Ruoxin has visited here twice in your absence. It seems like she has an important matter to ask of you," Sun Qiang reported with a peculiar look on his face.

Having followed the young master from the start of their journey at Tianxuan Kingdom, they had encountered plenty of beautiful ladies, each possessing their own unique charm. Yet, not once had the young master granted them any preferential treatment or behaved differently around them, except for this Luo shi!

Speaking of which, there was also something bizarre about Luo shi as well. No cultivator was uninterested in his young master's teachings, but this Luo shi was really the first. The way she acted around the young master showed that she only regarded the latter as another ordinary cultivator.

This in itself was truly perplexing.

"She came over to find me?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Luo Ruoxin was the only woman who had ever touched his heart, be it in his previous life or his current one. There had been many problems cropping up one after another, and he had been busy trying to deal with them, resulting in the both of them not meeting one another for a considerable period of time, but his heart still couldn't help but thump in anticipation upon hearing her name.

This was completely different from how he felt around Yu Fei-er and the others.

"Yes. As she is young master's good friend, I dared not probe further into it." Sun Qiang nodded.

"It's fine. I will pay her a visit to ask her about it later on," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

After confirming that there was nothing else to tend to, Zhang Xuan got up and made his way right toward the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Not too long later, he landed at Luo Ruoxin's residence.

Standing before the entrance of Luo Ruoxin's residence, he quickly tidied his clothes. After which, he took out a mirror and saw a handsome face staring back at him. Nodding in satisfaction, he knocked on the door.

"Luo shi, I am Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan said, transmitting his voice into the residence through his zhenqi.

The pleasant voice of a female replied, "Come in!"

Walking into the residence, Zhang Xuan saw Luo Ruoxin standing not too far away. Just like always, her presence felt calm and serene, reminiscent of a still painting. Surprisingly, there was another man standing not too far away from her—Mu Yuan.

After agreeing to meet at Firesource City back then, Mu shi had left together with Wu shi to return to Qingyuan Conferred Empire. Zhang Xuan didn't think that he would meet the other party here.

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Mu shi exclaimed anxiously, "Senior Uncle, you came at the perfect time. Help me talk some sense into Luo shi; she is insisting on following us to Firesource City as well!"

"You wish to go to Firesource City as well?" Taken aback, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the young lady before him.

"Un." Luo Ruoxin nodded with a slight smile on her lips. "With all of the mysteries surrounding the ancient domain, as a master teacher, I should also go and check it out as well."

"But... we know next to nothing about the ancient domain! Even Wu shi won't be able to guarantee your safety," Mu shi said worriedly.

Back then, the old principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had ventured into the ancient domain together with a team he had assembled, only to disappear from the face of the world. On top of that, the Qingyuan Master Teacher Pavilion had no records about the interior of the ancient domain at all, so there was no saying what dangers were lurking in the depths of the ancient domain

Not to mention, they had recently received news that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was involved with the ancient domain as well.

It could be said that this expedition into the ancient domain would likely result in great casualties. Given Luo shi's noble standing, there was no way he could take responsibility should anything happen to the other party.

While speaking, Mu shi was blinking frantically at Zhang Xuan, attempting to signal to the latter that he wanted help persuading Luo shi against it. With such obvious gesturing, he thought that his senior uncle would surely receive his signal. Yet...

"That's great, let's head there together then!" Zhang Xuan eyes gleamed in excitement.

It just so happened that he had been searching for an opportunity to spend some time with Luo shi when such a news came his way. It was as if even the heavens were on his side!

"Senior Uncle..." Mu shi's vision darkened, and he nearly fell to the ground.

To say such words after I have gestured so clearly for you to help me persuade her against it, don't you think that you are a little too shameless?

Even if you like Luo shi, at least be a little more reserved about it! To make it so obvious for everyone to see... don't you think that it is unbefitting of your standing as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

"It's fine! How can a master teacher grow if they attempt to avoid every single danger that comes their way?" Zhang Xuan waved his hands leisurely. "Besides, I will be around to protect her, so there is no way anything bad can happen!"

"..." Dark lines streaked across Mu shi's face.

You are the very reason that I am feeling very unsettled about this expedition! Look at all of those ridiculous things you have done in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy; it is as if trouble chases you wherever you go.

If only I knew that you were so unreliable, I would have never asked for your help!

Just as Mu shi was about to argue back, Luo Ruoxin waved her hands and said, "Zhang shi is right. Mu shi, there's no need to persuade me anymore; my mind is set."

"...Alright then." Seeing that there was no way he could convince the young lady before him otherwise, Mu shi shook his head helplessly.

Seeing that Mu shi had given up on the matter, Luo Ruoxin turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Since you are back, let's set forth as soon as possible."

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement. "Alright, let's set forth now."

There wasn't anything major in the Master Teacher Academy at the moment, and even if there was, School Head Mo and the others were more than capable of dealing with it themselves. Besides, there were only around eight days to the date on which they had agreed to meet at Firesource City. If they didn't set forth soon, it was likely that they would be unable to make it in time.

As Zhang Xuan often journeyed around, his necessities were neatly packed in his storage ring at all times, so there was no need for him to make any preparations. Mu

shi swiftly called for his aerial spirit beast, and before long, the trio was on their way toward Firesource City.

Sitting in the wooden hut atop the saint beast's back, Zhang Xuan turned to Mu shi and asked, "I heard that Zhao Bingxu and the others have brought quite a number of our students over to Firesource City. Did something happen?"

Sun Qiang might not have been qualified to learn about the details of the matter, but as one of the leaders of the expedition team, Mu shi definitely knew something about it.

"Something did happen," Mu shi said grimly. "Not too long ago, the seal leading to the ancient domain suddenly grew unstable, and it seems like it could collapse at any moment. As such, School Head Zhao lead the students over in the hope that they could stabilize the formation and buy some time until the seal finally opens once more."

"How did such a matter occur?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered.

When the ancient domain appeared two years ago, the Master Teacher Pavilion did send some men to investigate it, and there hadn't been a problem then. Why would the seal be destabilized all of a sudden?

"I am not too sure about the details either, but my guess is that the Otherworldly Demons are involved in this matter!" With a deep frown on his forehead, Mu shi hesitated for a moment before continuing. "According to reports from the local master teachers, there have been Otherworldly Demons sighted in the vicinity of the seal. Eyewitnesses claimed that they were carrying some kind of artifact with them, and they loitered around the area for a brief moment before hurriedly leaving. Shortly after they left, the seal suddenly destabilized."

"Artifact? Could it be a booklet?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The booklet that the Skyleaf King had stolen from the Poison Hall was said to have come from the ancient domain within the seal. For Otherworldly Demons to appear around the seal and destabilize it at this moment, could both matters possibly be related to one another?

The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more convinced he was of the matter.

As a Saint 5-dan expert, the Skyleaf King was capable of flying at speeds far greater

than he could. While it had taken Zhang Xuan roughly ten days to travel from Jingyuan City to Hongyuan City, it was likely that the Skyleaf King wouldn't even require five days to travel from the Poison Hall to Firesource City.

Furthermore, in his communications with the Violetleaf King, he had learned that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe possessed exceptional spatial means. Just take the altar that Zhang Xuan had found from the Greenleaf King and Goldenleaf King for example, it was capable of transporting and receiving items remotely.

"Booklet?" Not expecting to hear such a question, Mu shi was stunned for a moment before replying with a light chuckle. "That is impossible. How can a booklet possibly wield the power to destabilize the seal?"

In his view, books were only meant to store and impart knowledge. An artifact that could destabilize a powerful seal, which even they were helpless before, was bound to be an incredibly powerful one.

So how could it possibly be a mere booklet?

Seeing that the other party didn't believe him, Zhang Xuan shook his head and fell silent.

At this point, that was only a hypothesis on his part. It would still require confirming after they arrived at Firesource City.

Recalling the order received from the headquarters not too long ago, Mu shi said, "Oh, right! Senior Uncle, Wu shi won't be taking charge of the expedition into the ancient domain. Instead, the Master Teacher Pavilion has appointed a 7-star pinnacle Formation Master, Han Xu, as the expedition leader. The Master Teacher Pavilion has ordered for everyone involved in the expedition to follow his commands after entering the ancient domain, and no one is to move around recklessly so as to avoid undue trouble!"

Chapter 1014

Firesource City

The expedition to the ancient domain had implications that could very well affect the entire human race, so the Qingyuan Master Teacher Pavilion took the matter very seriously. Not only did they dispatch Wu shi, they had also engaged the help of 7-star pinnacle Formation Master Han Xu to aid the team in breaking the seal and leading them through the ancient domain.

Mu shi knew that even though his senior uncle was a very capable man, the other party was also a very gutsy and decisive person, never hesitating to do whatever that he thought was right. Fearing that some unneeded trouble might arise due to his senior uncle's obstinate personality, he felt that he should warn the other party in advance.

"Don't worry." Zhang Xuan nodded reassuringly.

Seeing the confident smile on Zhang Xuan's face, Mu shi wasn't too sure how he should respond. He subconsciously shot a glance at Luo Ruoxin and saw a slight smile of helplessness on the latter's face, seemingly untrusting of Zhang Xuan's words as well.

But thinking about it, it was no wonder Luo Ruoxin felt that way.

Back then, when she brought Zhang Xuan to the Saint Ascension Platform, she had warned him to remain respectful. But in the end, he had still collapsed the other party's cliff face, and if not for Kong shi speaking up in that crucial moment, he might very well have been pummeled to death on the spot.

Sometimes, that fellow possessed astounding talent and wits, such that one couldn't help but be impressed with him. At other times, he behaved so doltishly that it was nearly adorable.

The trio began chatting casually. In the midst of their conversation, Zhang Xuan asked a few more questions about the ancient domain, and upon learning that it likely had ties with Kong shi, he couldn't help but feel a surge of agitation.

Back at the Saint Ascension Platform, Zhang Xuan had asked Kong shi personally about

the Innate Fetal Poison and confirmed that the latter had suffered from the same affliction back then as well. If this ancient domain had ties with Kong shi, perhaps he might be able to uncover something more about the Innate Fetal Poison.

Amidst the conversation of the trio, the aerial saint beast traversed swiftly through the sky. Five days later, Firesource City finally came into sight.

Looking at the city, which emanated a reddish hue beneath the radiant rays of the sun, Mu shi said, "Due to the geographical location of Firesource City, its weather is exceptionally hot. To make things worse, it is currently summer here as well. It would probably be unbearable for anyone who isn't a cultivator to live here."

"It is indeed really hot here!" Feeling the incredible heat in the surroundings, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The place he had visited just a few days ago, Jingyuan City, was completely filled with snow, battering passers-by with its bone-chilling frost.

"Even though the Saint Ascension Platform isn't too far away from here, there sure is a vast difference in the temperature," Zhang Xuan remarked.

The Saint Ascension Platform, which he had visited with Luo Ruoxin back then, wasn't located too far away from Firesource City, just a few hundred kilometers away. Yet, the weather there was perfectly normal, devoid of the blistering heat here.

"The Saint Ascension Platform is where Kong shi became a Celestial Saint. It is a place blessed by the heavens, so naturally, the weather there is mild. On the other hand, Firesource City has quite a few active volcanoes around it, so it is inevitably plagued by such a hot weather," Mu shi explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had a map of Hongyuan Empire in the Library of Heaven's Path, so he was very familiar with the geography of the area.

To be named Firesource, the source of flames... It wasn't any surprise that the city would be plagued with unbearable heat.

Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but ask, "Given the unbearable heat plaguing the area, why was a city constructed here? Why do so many people still continue to live in the area?"

A place filled with many active volcanoes that could erupt at any moment, as well as the sweltering weather, why would people still live in the area?

Before Mu shi could speak, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly and replied, "As hot as the local weather is, it happens to be a suitable climate for growing plants that thrive in a torrid climate. Take the Witherleaf Grass for example, it is known for the withered look of its leaves throughout its growth, and it is able to mature even without water. A single stalk of Witherleaf Grass can easily fetch the price of a high-tier spirit stone in the market."

"It's so expensive?" Luo Ruoxin was taken aback.

A single high-tier spirit stone was more than sufficient for a normal person to live in luxury for their entire life.

For a single stalk of a medicinal herb to be worth such a price, it was no wonder so many people were willing to endure the unbearable weather and live here.

Zhang Xuan had not finished his explanation. "Not only so, there are also quite a few rare spirit beasts and saint beasts living in the area. They can fetch a high price when sold. Besides that, there are also several deposits of valuable ores in the area!"

Having read all of the books in the Master Teacher Academy, he boasted an even greater understanding of Hongyuan Empire than most master teachers who had grown up here.

"I see..." Luo Ruoxin nodded in realization.

There was bound to be a reason for a community to gather and a huge city to be constructed in the area.

Hearing the other party's introduction, Mu shi nodded in approval. "Senior Uncle sure is knowledgeable!"

While his senior uncle might be unreliable at times, the vast knowledge he possessed was truly praiseworthy. Be it information regarding culture, geography, or occupations, everything seemed to come to him at a single thought, leaving others with nothing but admiration for him.

It was due to this that the school heads had elected him to become the leader of the

Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, which boasted a heritage of ten thousand years.

"It's nothing much!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

"There is still some time before the seal opens, so why don't we meet up with the others at the local Master Teacher Pavilion first?"

While the trio had been speaking, the saint beast had arrived in the airspace above the city. It gradually descended, and before long, it landed right before a towering building.

The Master Teacher Pavilion!

This city was significantly larger than Jingyuan City, and its population density was also greater than the latter. As such, the Master Teacher Pavilion had constructed a branch in the area. However, it was significantly weaker than the Master Teacher Pavilion in Hongyuan City, and the pavilion master only possessed a cultivation of Saint 1-dan intermediate stage.

Shortly after walking in, a middle-aged man walked over to welcome them. "Paying respect to Mu shi!"

"Un. Where are Formation Master Han Xu, Wu shi, and the others? Bring us to them," Mu shi replied with a smile.

"Wu shi and the others have already left for the Swallow Embracing Mountain. They departed two days ago!" the middle-aged man hurriedly replied.

"They have already left for the Swallow Embracing Mountain?" Mu shi was taken aback. "Shouldn't there be a few more days before the seal opens? Why did they head over so early?"

"I am not too sure. They only instructed me to remain here to urge the arriving master teachers to head toward the Swallow Embracing Mountain as fast as possible!" the middle-aged man replied.

"Understood." Mu shi nodded before turning his gaze toward Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin. "If even Wu shi and Formation Master Han Xu have made their way over, it is very likely that the situation with the seal might have worsened. Let's quickly head over to take a look and see how we can help them!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin nodded before getting atop the aerial saint beast once more.

"The seal to the ancient domain is not located within the city but in the depths of the Swallow Embracing Mountain, which is around three hundred kilometers away, on top of a massive active volcano. Due to the searing temperature, barely anyone goes there..." Seated within the room on the back of the aerial saint beast, Mu shi filled the duo in on the situation regarding the seal.

Similar to the island on which the Poison Hall was located, the seal to the ancient domain was also constructed on top of an active volcano. The massive formation that made up the seal was driven by the ravaging energy contained within the volcano. If those who didn't have a comprehensive grasp of the formation were to attempt to break open the seal forcefully, there was a high chance that the entire mountain might collapse instead, causing the entrance to the ancient domain to disappear for good.

As such, not even the experts from the Master Teacher Pavilion dared to tamper with it. Until the seal opened of its own accord, they could only wait patiently.

It didn't take too long for Zhang Xuan and the others to cover the three-hundred-kilometer journey to the seal. In less than ten minutes, a towering mountain peak, several thousand meters high, appeared majestically before their eyes.

However, the entire mountain seemed to be absent of life; all they could really see on it were crimson stones. Even before coming close to the mountain, they could feel a searing sensation licking their skin.

Flicking his wrist, Mu shi took out two pills and passed them over. "This is the Heat Cleansing Pill. Swallowing it will grant you some immunity against fire poison 1 , sparing you from harm!"

While it wouldn't be too difficult for them to withstand such searing heat given their current cultivation, if they were to stay in such conditions for an extended period of time, the fire poison would still assault their bodies, causing them great suffering.

In order to prevent such a situation from occurring, half a month ago, the newly-appointed School Head Zhou of the Apothecary School had tasked his students with mass producing Heat Cleansing Pills for the expedition members.

The production method for the Heat Cleansing Pill wasn't too complicated; most 4-

star apothecaries were able to forge it. Its ingredients were mainly cooling in nature, thus granting it exceptional effectiveness in relieving heat-related afflictions.

"Thank you!"

Possessing the Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan didn't even fear lethal poison, so naturally, heat poison couldn't possibly faze him in the least. Nevertheless, this was a token of goodwill from the other party, so he couldn't bring himself to reject it. Taking the pill, he opened his mouth and swallowed it.

As soon as the pill slid down his throat, a cooling sensation permeated his entire body, leaving him feeling as if he was standing before a refreshing spring breeze. The heat around him seemed to have vanished altogether.

"This... This isn't an ordinary Heat Cleansing Pill?" Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

While it seemed no different from a typical Heat Cleansing Pill on the surface, the effectiveness of it was clearly far greater than an average pill.

"I forged it personally out of the various medicinal herbs I picked a while ago," Mu shi replied with a smile.

"No wonder!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Mu shi was a 7-star master teacher, and apothecary was one of his supporting occupations. It was only natural that a grade-4 pill forged by a 7-star apothecary would have outstanding effectiveness.

The aerial saint beast advanced swiftly, and not too long later, the group arrived at the peak of the Swallow Embracing Mountain. Gazing downwards, they saw a humongous hemispherical depression beneath them. Countless students were seated cross-legged along its perimeter, infusing zhenqi relentlessly toward a specific location. Their bodies were completely drenched in sweat, but that didn't prevent more from trickling down their faces.

"They are trying to stabilize the seal," Mu shi remarked grimly.

From the looks of it, the situation with the seal was far more precarious than they had thought. Otherwise, they wouldn't have mobilized so many people simultaneously to

stabilize it.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "Those are the ten thousand students from the Formation Master School."

The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy were dressed in a unique robe, so it wasn't too difficult to recognize them.

Hu hu hu!

Just as the students stabilizing the seal were about to reach their limits, another group of students suddenly rushed forward and swiftly placed formation flags that they had just smithed a moment ago on specific locations.

These new flags couldn't alter the structure of the seal in any way, but it could stabilize it temporarily.

They were the students from the Blacksmith School.

The students from both schools worked together with excellent teamwork, their movements both swift and fluid. It was apparent that they had repeated this set of movements multiple times over the past few days.

However, despite the combined efforts of the twenty thousand students, a powerful energy still continued to rage within the hemispherical depression below, seemingly ready to explode at any moment. Frowning, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and took a look.

After examining it for a moment, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. What a complicated formation this is.

His comprehension of formations was on par with most 7-star formation masters, and yet, he still found it rather difficult to comprehend the entire structure of the formation. The sheer complexity of the formation was enough to leave him slightly light-headed.

No, it doesn't really look like it...

The more Zhang Xuan looked at it, the more perplexed he felt.

The structure he was looking at seemed like a formation, but there was something rather different about it at the same time.

Even though the seal was unstable, it was still dormant, not yet activated. As such, Zhang Xuan couldn't use the Library of Heaven's Path to assess the situation concerning the formation. With his current understanding of formations, even with the Eye of Insight, it would likely take at least several months for him to make sense of it.

If it was truly a formation, there was no doubt that it was beyond grade-7!

A formation that was beyond grade-7... No wonder no master teacher from the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion dared tamper with it!

It was already far beyond their scope of understanding.

Hu hu hu!

While Zhang Xuan was busy assessing the depression, Mu shi carefully controlled his aerial spirit beast to land gently on the ground.

After landing safely, before the trio could walk up to the hemispherical depression, Wu shi walked over and said, "Zhang shi, Luo shi, and Mu shi, you are here!"

Chapter 1015

I Can Give It a Try

"Wu shi!"

The three of them clasped their fists to greet the other party.

"What is the current situation here?" Zhang Xuan got straight to the point.

"Half a month ago, the seal suddenly became unstable. Even so, with the forces that we have, we were still able to stabilize it easily. But two days ago, the seal suddenly began shaking intensely, threatening to collapse at any moment. Despite devoting all of our men to stabilizing the seal, we are barely hanging on at the moment. At this rate, it won't be long before the situation exceeds our control!" Wu shi glanced at the hemispherical depression with a worried frown.

"Exceeds our control?"

"Indeed." Wu shi nodded. Just as he was about to explain the matter, a deep rumbling reminiscent of thunder suddenly reverberated from the ground below. Like the cry of a behemoth or the roar of a massive dragon prowling beneath the mountain range, it seemed like a fearsome being would suddenly come to life and massacre everyone present.

"What is that?" The faces of Zhang Xuan and the others warped in astonishment.

That deep rumbling sounded like the source of a devastating calamity of some kind. Before such overwhelming force, the strength of humans felt pitifully insignificant in comparison. It felt like no amount of effort would stop the destruction from crashing down on them, devouring them all.

"We've looked into the matter, and it seems like that sound originates from the other side of the seal. There is no way for us to find out for sure what is going on within at the moment, but at this rate, it won't be long before the entire seal collapses. Once that happens, be it the ancient domain or Firesource City, they will be reduced to ashes!" Wu shi said worriedly.

If the seal was destroyed, it could very well result in the rampaging energies within the volcano running amok, thus inducing a massive explosion. The Swallow Embracing Mountain was only three hundred kilometers away from Firesource City. At such a short distance away, there was no doubt that Firesource City would be devastated by the massive explosion as well, killing even Saint realm experts that stood in its path.

Far too much energy had gathered beneath the volcano over the years, to the point where no human could withstand it!

Hong long long!

While they were speaking, the rumbling grew louder and louder. The ground began shaking violently, and a scorching burst of air gushed up from the depths of the seal. In an instant, over half of the formation flags that had just been planted a moment ago were jolted out of the ground.

The students of the Formation Master School, who were sitting before the hemispherical depression to stabilize the seal, instantly looked weakened, and a few hundred of them were abruptly sent flying from the spot. Huge mouthfuls of blood spewed from their mouths.

A new group of students hurried forward to fill the gaps left behind by the casualties. Exerting the full extent of their cultivation, they tried their best to stabilize the seal, preventing it from collapsing.

"What an incredible force..." Upon seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan's face paled.

The might gushing out from beneath was far beyond his expectations. Even the collaboration of multiple Saint 5-dan experts might not be able to suppress it.

Even with so many students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy infusing their power into it, they were still barely holding on.

Before such immense power, putting aside entering the ancient domain, he would be reduced to dust by the powerful force before he could even get close to the seal!

Before, he had been thinking that no matter how dangerous the ancient domain was, as long as he were to rely on his Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven's Path to assess the situation ahead of him, he would be able to avert danger with relative ease. But

from the looks of it now, his thoughts had been too naive!

Even the dangers lurking outside the ancient domain were far greater than he had expected. The slightest mistake could easily result in death!

At this moment, a loud bellow was heard throughout the area.

" Team A, guard the Gen. Team B, guard the Xun. Team C, guard the Qian. 1 As for the other teams, remain where you are and continue infusing your zhenqi into the seal!"

Following that, an elder flew into the sky and stood above everyone else. A massive compass floated before him, which he used to make calculations as he continued issuing orders here and there.

Hearing his instructions, the students beneath hurriedly moved in the teams they had formed before and carried out the instructions demanded of them. Following which, innumerable surges of zhenqi poured forth, converging at the very center of the depression. In that moment, it looked as if someone had set off a massive firework.

Under the influx of zhenqi, the fortified seal slowly calmed down. At the same time, the rumbling beneath the ground also gradually quietened down, as if being forcefully suppressed.

After studying the situation for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly noticed something, and a deep frown arched between his brows. "Wait a moment... If the seal is fortified in such a manner, how can it be opened later?"

This method of reinforcing the formation was indeed effective in coping with the assault of the fearsome force from below, bringing safety back to the area. However... there was a major problem with this solution!

The fortification of the seal meant that it would become harder for them to open the seal and enter the ancient domain. In fact, if this continued, it might become entirely impossible to do so!

According to their previous estimates, the seal was likely to open within two to three days. However, if they were to continue reinforcing the seal in such a manner, putting aside three days, the seal might not even open within the next three years!

"Indeed, but there's nothing we can do about this situation. If we leave the seal be, the

volcano will explode without a shred of doubt. Not only will the ancient domain be destroyed, the entire area, including Firesource City, will be devastated as well."

If they had a choice, they obviously wouldn't fortify the seal. But if they didn't do so, the ancient domain would be completely destroyed, making it impossible for them to enter!

Besides, considering how volatile the immense energies that had accumulated beneath the volcano were, who would dare enter even if it was possible to do so? After all, there was no one who could guarantee that the volcano wouldn't act up while they were within! Once that happened, they could very well be torn to shreds by that overwhelming force!

"Is there really no alternative solution other than to fortify the formation?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"There is, but... it simply isn't feasible!" Wu shi shook his head.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to Wu shi and said, "Tell me about it."

The situation was already as bad as it could get. At this point, they had to try everything that they could.

"The seal is similar to a cover that suppresses the violent energies raging beneath the volcano. Using a metaphor, the current situation is similar to that of a balloon. Initially, when the energies attempting to burst out from beneath weren't too great, the seal was still able to keep them in through its elasticity," Wu shi explained.

"However, as more and more energies accumulated, the seal rapidly found itself coming to its limit, putting it under threat of exploding altogether! Through reinforcing the seal, we are effectively bringing the breaking point of the seal higher, allowing the seal to withstand the rampaging energies by a greater degree.

"However, no matter how much we fortify the seal, as long as the energies beneath the ground continue to accumulate, the seal will eventually reach its limit. In a sense, we are only pushing back the inevitable. Unless we resolve the root of the problem, the accumulation of energies below, there will come a day when the seal exceeds its breaking point and bursts!"

Hearing the other party's explanation, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The metaphor the other party used was a fitting description of the current situation they were in.

The root of the problem was still the accumulation of energies beneath the ground. The fortification of the formation only served to rein the rampaging energies in for the time being; it wasn't a long-term measure. In fact, the longer the energies were suppressed, the greater the accumulation of energies, resulting in the eventual explosion being more devastating than it already was.

To make an analogy, it was similar to constructing a dam to prevent a flood.

The more water it kept at bay, the higher the water level would be, and the greater the pressure the dam would be put under. When the dam eventually collapsed, the flood would come crashing down with far greater momentum than it originally would.

If something similar were to happen here as well, it would spell a great calamity.

"The other solution we have thought of is to dispel the energies accumulated below directly. It would solve the root of the problem, but... before the seal is opened, there is no way we can venture below to identify the cause of the accumulation of energies and resolve the issue. On the other hand, the moment the seal is opened, the accumulated energies will surely burst forth, resulting in a catastrophic explosion." Wu shi shook his head with a bitter smile.

This was a paradox. To dispel the energies, they would have to break open the seal and enter the other side. But the moment this was done, an explosion would burst forth, annihilating everything in the area.

"This..." Zhang Xuan and Mu shi glanced at one another and shook their heads helplessly.

Wu shi was right; this was indeed an irresolvable problem. Despite knowing the dangers of fortifying the seal continuously, they had no choice but to do it.

At this point, Zhang Xuan suddenly thought of something and asked, "I heard from a master teacher stationed in the Master Teacher Pavilion that just before this problem occurred, Otherworldly Demons were spotted to be lurking around the vicinity. Is this true?"

"That's right!" Wu shi nodded. "The Otherworldly Demons didn't remain in the area

for long before fleeing. We have no idea what they did in the short period of time that they were here, but the seal suddenly grew unstable. It was still rather manageable at the start, and we were able to easily suppress it with just a couple of us in the area. However, as time ticked by, the instability worsened, and eventually... as you can see, even with the combined might of twenty thousand students, we are barely holding on!"

"They didn't remain in the area for long before fleeing?" Zhang Xuan repeated Wu shi's words contemplatively and fell into a moment of thought. A moment later, he asked, "Who was the one who spotted the Otherworldly Demons?"

"It was an ordinary 4-star master teacher. He was stationed as a sentry in the area when it happened," Wu shi replied.

"An ordinary 4-star master teacher would only possess a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 4-dan, and yet... he noticed the movements of the Otherworldly Demons?" Zhang Xuan remarked with a tinge of bewilderment in his tone.

He had encountered many Otherworldly Demons who had passed through the seal for the ancient domain, and even the weakest of them was a Saint 1-dan.

How could an ordinary 4-star master teacher, a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan cultivator, notice them but still remain alive at this point?

Given the vast disparity in cultivation, it was inconceivable to think that the Otherworldly Demons hadn't noticed the presence of the 4-star master teacher.

"Don't worry, that master teacher is definitely trustworthy. There is no way he could have betrayed mankind," Wu shi hurriedly added.

"I am not suspecting that 4-star master teacher of colluding with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe..." Zhang Xuan shook his head. Halfway through his words, the ground suddenly began to rumble once more.

"Initially, the energies would only act up once every four to six hours. However, the intervals between each surge has been decreasing swiftly, and at this point, it is less than ten minutes," Wu shi said.

Two days ago, due to the lower frequency of the rampaging energies acting up, their forces were still able handle it with relative ease. However, with an assault coming

once every ten minutes, everyone was already on the brink of collapse!

"My students won't be able to hold on for too long at this rate," Zhang Xuan said with a livid face.

Twenty thousand of his students were currently standing atop the Swallow Embracing Mountain, and a significant proportion of them were from the Xuanxuan Faction as well. An assault once every few hours was still within their means, but one that occurred every ten minutes... They would be pushing themselves to the limits! At this rate, they might very well end up pushing themselves too far and incur permanent damage to their foundations, resulting in a steep decline in their cultivation.

"I know, but there is no better solution at the moment." Wu shi sighed in frustration.

At this point, Luo Ruoxin suddenly spoke up. "Since it is just a matter of time before the energies burst forth, why don't you just create an opening to guide the rampaging energies out instead? This way, you should be able to resolve the root of the problem as well."

"Create an opening? It is not that we haven't considered such a solution before, but given the overwhelming energies that have accumulated at the moment, if we create an opening at the wrong location, it could end up becoming a trigger for an explosion instead. The seal would be torn apart, and in the worst-case scenario... we could all die!" Wu shi said.

Using the same balloon analogy, a balloon that expanded continuously would burst eventually. To prevent such a situation from happening, one could poke an opening in it to release the accumulated air gradually. However, this was easier said than done. If one were to create an opening at the wrong location, it could very well become a trigger that would cause the balloon to explode instantaneously.

All of the master teachers that were currently standing atop the Swallow Embracing Mountain would be reduced to ashes.

As such, how many openings to create and where the openings should be made were very important questions to consider. A mistake made in either of the two could spell their demise. Even with 7-star master teachers and 7-star formation masters among them, they weren't confident enough to take such a risky action.

"So, we just have to find the most suitable locations to release the built-up energies?"

Hearing the conversation between the two, Zhang Xuan's eyes suddenly lit up. With a look of excitement, he said, "Regarding that matter... perhaps I can give it a try!"

Chapter 1016

Zhang Xuan Breaks the Seal (1)

As long as he could activate the formation, he would be able to find the flaws in it through the Library of Heaven's Path. That would be even more accurate than any compass that one could find.

It was nigh impossible for others to find the precise location of where the openings should be made, how big the openings should be, and how much strength one should exert in opening it. However, that happened to be the easiest thing in the world for Zhang Xuan.

"Give it a try?" Wu shi shook his head. "I know that Principal Zhang possesses extraordinary talent in the field of formations, but the implications are simply too great. Failure is not an option for us, so you mustn't act recklessly!"

Failure would spell the instantaneous explosion of the volcano, and that would reduce all of them to ash. This was no laughing matter, and it was definitely not something that one should 'give a try'.

"I know." Nodding in agreement, Zhang Xuan was just about to explain himself when a voice from the sky harrumphed coldly.

"Give it a try? Humph, can you bear the responsibility if something goes wrong? For a person as young as you to speak such big words, what is the world becoming?"

Hong long!

An elder bellowed coldly as he descended from the sky, heading toward the group. He was the 7-star pinnacle formation master who had been busy taking control of the situation to fortify the formation, Han Xu!

His face looked withered from the fatigue he had accumulated over the days, but at this moment, not even his exhaustion could conceal the sharp coldness and displeasure he was directing toward Zhang Xuan.

"Guild Leader Han... Allow me to introduce you!" Wu shi hurriedly stepped forward to resolve the air of awkwardness drifting between them. "This is the newly-appointed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan. This young lady over here is Luo shi. As for Mu shi over here, I don't think that I will have to introduce him since you are old friends with him. Principal Zhang and Luo shi, this is the head of our Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild, Han Xu!"

"You are Zhang Xuan?" Hearing the introduction, Han Xu turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "I have heard of you. To be able to become a 6-star formation master at such a young age, you are indeed an outstanding talent.

"However... as a master teacher, you must speak with prudence. Recklessness is the most common cause of the downfall of young talents. Everyone here knows that releasing the built-up energies within is a far better solution than forcefully stopping it, but do you know what the consequences of failure are? Not only will we die, everything within a radius of a thousand kilometers from here will be eradicated. Countless lives will vanish in an instant... Are you certain that you can shoulder such responsibility?"

Knowing that the other party was only berating him because the other party thought that he was taking such a grave matter lightly, Zhang Xuan quickly explained himself with a smile. "Guild Leader Han, you have misunderstood what I am saying. When I said that I would give it a try, I meant that I will do so only after I am entirely confident of success. Naturally, I dare not fool around with so many lives at stake!"

"How arrogant!" Yet another middle-aged man walked over with a disdainful look on his face. "This seal before us may very well be a grade-8 formation or even higher than that. My teacher and I have analyzed it for more than two days now, but we are still unable to find a foolproof way to release the energies within the seal without triggering an explosion. Yet, without even taking a look at the formation, you are saying that you are confident of success? As the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, don't you think that you are being a little too arrogant here?"

The middle-aged man harnessed immense strength within him, such that even his very presence could exert great pressure on those looking at him.

Saint 3-dan, Embryonic Soul realm!

The Embryonic Soul realm was also known as the Origin Soul realm. In this cultivation

realm, one's Origin Core would metamorphose into the form of a human, pushing one a step further toward the Primordial Spirit realm. Cultivators at the Embryonic Soul realm possessed incredibly powerful souls, allowing them to subdue cultivators far weaker than them with just the pressure exerted through their presence itself.

"Cough cough. Zhang shi, this gentleman over here is Guild Leader Han's student, 7-star Formation Master Liu Mo!" Not expecting the casual words from Zhang shi to cause such a fallout, Wu shi awkwardly attempted to remedy the situation.

For the past two days, Guild Leader Han and his student had put in a lot of effort to find a suitable node where they could release the energies. For this, they hadn't rested for even a single moment, but they were still unable to find a node that they were entirely confident was safe to open.

They were already cranky from the frustrating situation before them, but a fellow actually came by at such a moment and arrogantly said that he would give it a try, as if it was something that could be resolved very easily. In that instant, the frustration that had accumulated in them over the past two days was ignited into blazing rage.

"Liu Mo?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Never heard of you before."

He had never been to Qingyuan Empire before, so naturally, he knew nothing about the guild leader or formation masters in the Formation Master Guild there. Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have pointed it out in view of the other party's pride. However, since the other party was behaving in such a manner, he couldn't be bothered to act courteously with the other party anymore either.

"You..." Not expecting the other party to retort to his words, Liu Mo flung his sleeves furiously and harrumphed. "It doesn't matter whether you heard of me or not. I am an ordinary formation master in the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild anyway."

"You are misunderstanding my words, I am not just referring to you!" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan looked at the other party earnestly and added, "I am saying that I have never heard of Guild Leader Han as well!"

"You..." Nearly exploding with fury, Liu Mo's face turned crimson.

Guild Leader Han also nearly spurted blood on the spot.

Even though he, Han Xu, couldn't say that his name was known throughout the entire

Qingyuan Conferred Empire, he had at least been relatively well-known for several centuries now. Each year, there were countless master teachers who wished come under his lineage in hopes of studying the Way of Formations from him. Yet, this fellow before him had actually shot him down along with his student.

Yet, he simply couldn't flare up over this matter, or he would risk appearing petty. He felt so stifled that he could tear his hair out in frenzy.

Hearing the conversation between the two, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but chuckle.

To bicker with this fellow... You will be the one spurting blood in the end!

This fellow is one who doesn't care about conventions or rules, a person who dares to even insult Kong shi!

To think that you can win against someone like that is indubitably a gross overestimation of yourself!

Waving his hands leisurely, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back before taking a step forward. "Alright, there is no need to get so agitated just because I don't know about you. As the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, I have many things on my agenda. I don't have time to find out the names of every single lad who comes my way!"

He gazed deeply into the massive depression before him for a moment before saying, "Wu shi, prepare a formation flag for me. It will best if it's a grade-7 pinnacle formation flag!"

"This..." Wu shi was conflicted.

Seeing that the other party was intent on creating an opening to let out the energies, Liu Mo immediately stood up and roared furiously, "Hold it right there! Do you really intend to bring so many people down with you?"

Did that fellow know what kind of risk he was putting everyone under?

He and his teacher had spent two days assessing the formation, but even they couldn't be entirely certain of their conclusion. Out of fear of the devastating explosion that could occur were they to fail, they dared not to even test it out. Yet, the other party had been here for only ten minutes, and he was already eagerly trying to create an opening in the seal.

There are more than twenty thousand master teachers up here! Even if you are tired of living, you need not bring everyone down with you!

While the other principals were doing their best to ensure the safety of their students, this lunatic was trying to have his students buried with him. To act so recklessly without getting a clear view of the situation, just how in the world did such a fool get nominated as Hongyuan's principal?

"You are thinking too much... The reason the both of you aren't able to find the correct node to open the formation at, even after two days of effort, isn't because you aren't working hard enough but because you are fools! Naturally, I won't be the same as you two!" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan ignored the two and walked up to the depression.

"Principal Zhang!" Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the many students guarding the depression hurriedly stood up and looked at him with gazes of admiration.

"Un. You have all worked hard." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"It is our responsibility to work for the welfare of mankind," the students hurriedly replied.

Seeing the other party walking up to the seal, Liu Mo turned to look at his teacher anxiously. "Teacher, we mustn't allow that fellow to fool around!"

"Don't worry, it is not that easy to find a node. Even after two days of effort, we were only able to deduce five plausible nodes. There is no way that he will be able to find one that easily!" Guild Leader Han shook his head.

Honestly speaking, he didn't think that Zhang Xuan would be able to even deduce a plausible node that the energies could possibly be released from.

After all, even a 7-star pinnacle formation master like him was unable to find it even after two days of effort, so how could a 6-star formation master possibly succeed?

"But... I fear that he would recklessly create an opening in the seal despite his ignorance! If he gets it wrong, a calamity could very well befall us," Liu Mo said anxiously.

"Don't worry, even after he finds a node, he will need some time to create an opening to draw the energies out. We will have more than sufficient time to stop him." Guild

Leader Han waved his hands confidently.

"Ah... I was too rash!" Hearing those words, Liu Mo heaved a sigh of relief.

Indeed, finding a node required time, and creating an opening to channel the energies out required time as well. As esteemed figures, there was no need for them to fall out at this point yet.

If the other party really intended to create an opening in the seal, it wouldn't be too late for them to stop it then.

"Un. I have heard a lot about this Principal Zhang, and it seems like he possesses extraordinary talent in the Way of Formations. It is a pity that he is still too young and reckless. However, this will be a good experience for him. Youngsters like him have to meet with a few failures before they learn that the world is far greater than what they can see. The Way of Formations is an extremely profound art. It is not something that someone who has just barely gotten a glimpse of it should speak lightly about!" Guild Leader Han chuckled.

"Let him give it a try first. Once he fails to find a node, he will realize his own ignorance."

"Yes!" Hearing those words, Liu Mo couldn't help but direct a gaze of admiration toward his teacher.

Do you see this? This is what a true master is like! Despite having been insulted by another, he is still thinking in the other party's stead.

Ignoring the conversing duo, Zhang Xuan began assessing the seal before him carefully.

Green lines gathered within his black eyes—Eye of Insight.

This isn't working. This formation is too profound for my current eye of discernment and knowledge; I can't make sense out of it at all. Zhang Xuan shook his head.

If it had been any other formation, even if it was a grade-7 pinnacle formation, with his Eye of Insight and his comprehension of formations, he would surely have been able to find its flaws and decipher it with sufficient time.

But the one before him left him completely clueless.

I will have to use the Library of Heaven's Path for this one. Sighing deeply, a frown emerged on Zhang Xuan's forehead. But to use the Library of Heaven's Path, I will have to find a way to activate the formation. I won't be able to find its flaws in its current dormant state.

Frustrated, he pinched his glabella with his fingers.

The Library of Heaven's Path could only compile a book on a formation when it was active.

Even though the seal covering the ancient domain was suppressing the rampaging energies beneath it, it was actually still dormant. With the formation in such a state, Zhang Xuan wouldn't be able to compile a book on it even if he were to scream 'Flaws!'.

He would have to activate the formation, but... how could he do so?

Zhang Xuan fell into deep thought.

...

"He isn't using a compass at all? To be neither assessing the geographical terrain nor the flow of spiritual energy in the air... Does this fellow even know the first thing about formations?"

Liu Mo had been keeping a close eye on the arrogant Principal Zhang, wanting to see how the other party would find a node after bragging so much. However, he only saw the latter standing in a daze before the depression, pinching his glabella in frustration.

For the other party to not take out his compass or even take a sweeping glance to assess his surroundings...

How in the world would one assess a formation like that?

"Perhaps this might be a unique method he has learned somewhere." Guild Leader Han was also bewildered by the sight before him.

"Let's hope that is the case... W-wait a moment. What is he doing?"

Just as Liu Mo nodded in agreement, he suddenly caught sight of Principal Zhang's actions, and he nearly fainted from sheer shock.

The other party had hesitated in front of the depression for a brief moment before abruptly lifting a massive boulder and tossing it into the depression.

Chapter 1017

Zhang Xuan Breaks the Seal (2)

All kinds of defensive formations had been set up in the depression. Tossing a boulder over could be considered an attack, and it could very well incur the seal's retaliation.

While the other formation masters were relying on their compasses to search for the crux of formidable formations to decipher them, this fellow had actually tossed a boulder in. This was no longer an attempt to decipher the formation but one to activate it!

Even while the seal was dormant, the twenty thousand of them here coupled with two powerful formation masters were already finding it hard to stabilize the seal. If it were to be activated, wouldn't it cause a huge calamity?

Just what was in the mind of that fellow? Was there a loose screw in there or something?

Otherwise, how could he make such a foolish decision? He was a 6-star pinnacle formation master, but he was making an error that even an apprentice formation master would know better than to do!

Stifled, Han Xu and Liu Mo hurriedly rushed forward to stop the other party, but it was already too late. The boulder plummeted into the formation and came into contact with the seal.

However, it didn't induce a change in the seal.

Seeing that nothing had happened, Liu Mo heaved a sigh of relief. "That was a close one! It seems like the seal only reacts to living beings, so it wasn't activated after coming into contact with the boulder. Otherwise, I can't even begin to imagine what would have happened."

The seal was intricately linked to the rampaging energies that had accumulated beneath it. Once activated, there was a good chance that it could cause a disturbance in the energies below and cause them to act up once more, thus bringing more work

to the already exhausted students. In the worst-case scenario, it might even induce an explosion on the spot.

After the fellow tossed the boulder in, he had suddenly fallen still. As a 6-star pinnacle formation master, he must have realized how risky his previous action was and was trembling fearfully at the thought of what could have happened.

Just as Liu Mo thought the other party would give up, the other party abruptly beckoned with his hand, and one of the students of the Hongyuan Master teacher Academy rushed over. The other party leaned forward and whispered a few words into the other party's ears.

A grim expression immediately surfaced on the student's face. Without any hesitation, he bellowed loudly and jumped straight into the depression, heading toward the seal.

Pu!

Not expecting that the other party would disregard his own student's welfare and send him to his death, Liu Mo felt so stifled that he nearly fainted on the spot.

That fellow was a fool, but to think that his student would be even more foolish! To charge in like that... It was possible to activate the formation in such a manner, but the instant the formation came to life, that student would die!

"Preposterous!" While Liu Mo was shocked by the sight before him, his teacher was completely enraged by the scene.

While others regarded their own students as their own children, protecting and caring for them, this fellow actually sent his student into the depression to test out the seal. To recklessly place his student in such danger, just how much more ridiculous could he get?

"Stop right there!" Bellowing furiously, Han Xu was just about to rush up to stop them when Zhang Xuan abruptly stretched his hand forward and grasped tightly. His zhenqi shot forth like a rope, swiftly wrapping around the student who had just jumped into the depression.

Just as he was about to come into contact with the seal, the zhenqi rope wrapped around the student abruptly pulled him back, dragging him out of the depression at an incredible speed.

At the same time, the seal seemed to have sensed the presence of life, and brilliant radiance flickered from it. However, contrary to Han Xu's previous worry, the activation of the seal didn't cause the explosion of the energies below. Instead, the formation whirled into action for a short moment before slowing to a stop, as if its activation wasn't complete.

"What precise control..." Guild Leader Han Xu's face warped in astonishment.

To be able to pull his student back in the very instant that the other party came into contact with the seal required an extremely deep understanding of the seal and very precise calculations of the positioning and velocity of his student!

Even the slightest centimeter of difference could either cause the formation to completely activate and devour the student or the formation to not sense the student altogether and result in nothing happening at all.

Of course, after the past two days of studying the formation, he was also capable of achieving the same feat. What truly left him astonished was the impressive teamwork and deep trust between the student and Principal Zhang!

Had there been the slightest difference in the action just a moment ago, the outcome could very well have been vastly difference. For the student to remain completely still while falling into the depression, not struggling in the slightest, it could only mean that he had complete trust in Principal Zhang.

Furthermore, for the student to jump without any hesitation just because Principal Zhang told him to... If Han Xu were to issue the same command to Liu Mo, the latter was unlikely to do the same.

It was not that Liu Mo didn't trust him, but there was a clear line of difference between trust and blind faith.

After the student was retrieved, Principal Zhang froze on the spot once more, seemingly falling into a daze. A moment later, he turned around.

"Wu shi, are you done preparing the grade-7 pinnacle formation flag yet?"

After a moment of hesitation, Wu shi flicked his wrist and passed a formation flag over.
"Here it is."

On top of being a 7-star pinnacle master teacher, he was a 7-star formation master as well. While his proficiency as a formation master was beneath that of Guild Leader Han, he still had a couple of grade-7 pinnacle formation flags in his possession.

"Un." Taking the formation flag, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. Without any hesitation, he stomped on the ground and flew into the air, heading toward the airspace right above the depression.

Driving his zhenqi, he grasped his formation flag tightly, seemingly searching for a node to plant it into.

"That fellow has gone bonkers! Liu Mo, hurry up and stop him!" Seeing that Principal Zhang was going to try creating an opening without even discussing the matter with them, Guild Leader Han nearly died of shock.

He had seen reckless people in his lifetime, but never had he seen someone as reckless as that!

Even if you have confirmed a node to plant your formation flag into, you should at least discuss the matter with us! To rush right over without saying a word at all... Are you really that confident that your judgement is correct?

You must know that if you err, it won't just be the twenty thousand master teachers on the Swallow Embracing Mountain who will pay for your mistake. It will be all living beings within a radius of a thousand kilometers!

This is truly making light of the matter!

"Yes!" Hearing his teacher's command, Liu Mo immediately flitted right toward Zhang Xuan.

At this moment, he was also extremely enraged by the impetuous actions of the other party. If he could, he really would tear the self-important fellow before him into pieces!

Hu!

Liu Mo thrust his palm forward, and a powerful burst of zhenqi shot forth from his hands.

In that instant, it seemed as if even the world had dulled before his powerful might as

a Saint 3-dan cultivator.

"Hmm?"

Zhang Xuan was in the midst of searching for a node to stabilize the formation, but before he could make a move, he suddenly found that Liu Mo had launched an attack against him. His eyebrows immediately shot up in displeasure.

This fellow... just what kind of insanity streak was he on?

They had only had a small verbal conflict earlier. As a 7-star formation master, surely he didn't need to be so narrow-minded!

But since the other party had already made his move, he couldn't possibly sit idly and allow the other party to do as he pleased. With a deep frown, Zhang Xuan retaliated with a palm on his own.

Hong long!

Zhang Xuan's palm carried immense strength as well. Clashing squarely with the other party's palm strike, a deafening explosion resounded in the air. Surprisingly, they were actually equally-matched.

"What powerful strength!" Liu Mo narrowed his eyes in alarm.

Even though he had used less than a tenth of his strength to stop the other party, the fact that the other party had been able to parry his blow so easily went to show that the other party wasn't just an ordinary Nascent Saint!

With such strength, the other party was already on par with most Saint 2-dan cultivators!

Geji! Geji!

Liu Mo began gathering his strength once more to launch yet another attack at Zhang Xuan so as to force him to back down, but at that moment, a shrill sound abruptly echoed in the air.

Following which, the deep rumbling of thunder suddenly boomed beneath the ground, threatening to burst forth at any moment.

"This is bad, the rampaging energies are going to strike again..." Liu Mo's eyes widened in fear.

The rampaging energies struck once every ten minutes. Clearly, ten minutes had just passed, and it was ready to strike once more.

Liu Mo clenched his teeth tightly and roared furiously, "Stop what you're doing right there! If you don't wish to kill everyone here, you'd better stop moving right now!"

He knew full well that the rumbling heralded another burst of rampaging energies. It was already difficult for their group to withstand the burst as it was; if anything were to happen at this moment, their entire group might just be decimated!

Knowing that he had to stop Zhang Xuan at all costs, his hand darted swiftly toward the other party.

This was the most powerful attack he had. As soon as his hand clawed forward, the air surrounding the Swallow Embracing Mountain suddenly seemed to gather together, causing the flow of spiritual energy to halt.

Seeing that Liu Mo was making a move against him once more, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure. What is that fool trying to do?

Once the current wave of rampaging energies burst forth, the entire seal would be jolted, resulting in a slight deviation in the calculations he had made with great difficulty.

Due to the precarious situation of the seal, even the slightest deviation in the force and positioning when creating the opening could result in a vastly different outcome. As such, there was no room for error at all. He had just managed to find the correct node, and all he had to do at the moment was plant the flag, then the crisis would be averted. Yet, this fellow had caused trouble at this crucial moment.

Truly, there was nothing worse than a pig-like teammate!

No, this won't do. The energies below are about to burst forth, and once it does, I will have to redo my calculations right from the start once more, Zhang Xuan thought anxiously.

But this fellow is far stronger than me. I was only able to withstand his assault earlier

because he underestimated me and didn't use his full strength. Now that he is putting his entirety into attacking me. He won't be able to kill me, but to dodge his attacks while successfully planting the formation flag into the node will be practically impossible.

The planting of the formation flag should have been something that only took an instant, but the matter had been complicated with that fellow causing trouble.

The other party was a Saint 3-dan cultivator. Even with Zhang Xuan's superior fighting prowess that allowed him to rival opponents stronger than him, he was still hardly a match for the other party.

"Since that's the case... pardon me!"

Knowing that he couldn't afford to be tied down by the other party at this crucial moment, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes and bellowed loudly, "The students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, listen to my command. Beat the living hell out of that fellow!"

"Yes!" Upon hearing their principal's command, the twenty thousand students simultaneously released a war cry as they raised their palms together.

Hong long!

Individually, these students weren't too powerful; a huge proportion of them were only at the Cosmos Bridge realm and Perfect Harmonization realm. However, when their strength was put together, they were a sight to behold. Twenty thousand surges of zhenqi gathered together as one, forming a massive dragon that charged furiously toward Liu Mo. Under the overwhelming might produced by the collaborative strength of the students, even the surrounding space began to distort under the pressure.

"This is bad..." Not expecting the other party to order all of his students to launch an attack against him, Liu Mo's face turned ashen.

He could already hardly fend for himself at this point, let alone persist in his attack against Zhang Xuan. Thus, he hurriedly retracted his palm and redirected his might toward the massive dragon headed toward him.

The next instant, the moment the two forces collided, Liu Mo's figure was rocketed backward as if a cannonball, spewing out huge mouthfuls of blood in the midst of his

flight.

Even a Saint 5-dan expert would have no choice but flee in the face of the combined might of the twenty thousand students, let alone him!

"Good!" Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He could tell that his students had held back in their attack so that the other party wouldn't suffer any life-threatening damage. With the hindrance resolved, Zhang Xuan hurriedly aimed the formation flag in his grasp toward a certain location, preparing to throw it in.

"Hold it right there!"

But before the formation flag could leave his grasp, he heard another bellow. Glancing over, Zhang Xuan saw Guild Leader Han charging toward him as well.

Hong long long!

While Guild Leader Han made his move, the rumbling beneath the ground grew more and pronounced, heralding the imminent arrival of a devastating force.

Knowing that it would be too late if he didn't make a move soon, Zhang Xuan bellowed furiously once more. "Beat him down as well!"

"Yes!"

All of the students nodded simultaneously as they gathered their strength together once more, ready to strike down the lone figure in the air.

"You all dare..." Guild Leader Han's face turned livid.

He might have been a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, but he was still unable to withstand the simultaneous attack from twenty thousand students.

Clenching his jaws tightly, he roared indignantly, "I am trying to save you all! If your principal's flag lands, all of you will be goners..."

Hong long!

But before he could finish his words, a powerful burst of radiance struck him.

The vision before him darkened before he was rocketed into the distance, similar to Liu Mo. His body crashed heavily into a cliff face some distance away, and the impact cloaked his entire body with a layer of dust.

Chapter 1018

There's No Need to Tense Up; It Will Be Over Once I Put It in a Little!

Guild Leader Han was on the brink of madness.

He just couldn't understand why these students had so much trust in that unreliable principal of theirs.

No matter what, he had spent the past two days working closely alongside them as comrades, and a bond of camaraderie had been forged between them. Under normal circumstances, even if it was at the command of their principal, shouldn't they have at least hesitated before attacking him?

Yet, without even bothering to spend time thinking the matter through, they had gathered their strength together and sent him flying.

This was no longer obedience; it was more like they were Principal Zhang's devout followers!

He had even informed them that they might very well lose their lives should their principal identify the wrong node, and yet, their attack hadn't even wavered in the slightest.

What did this signify? It meant that they were all willing to stake their entirety on the twenty-year-old youth before him without any hesitation. Even if the other party was their principal, surely they didn't need to trust him so much that they even abandoned their common sense!

This was truly one of the most eccentric bunch of students he had ever met!

Struggling up from a pile of fragmented rocks, he turned his gaze toward the sky once more and saw that the formation flag had already left Zhang Xuan's hand, headed toward a node.

"We're doomed." Guild Leader Han's eyes were glazed with hopelessness.

It happened that he had done the calculations for the node that the other party was throwing at as well, and it was a point where the energies were the most volatile. If a formation flag was thrown into that point, not only would it not alleviate the situation, it would even induce an explosion with utmost certainty.

Who could have thought that he, Han Xu, despite the great fame and achievements he had accrued in his lifetime, would end up dying in such a manner, dragged down by an impertinent fellow who obstinately drove them down the path of demise? Just the thought of it left him feeling incredibly stifled, and he couldn't help but wallow in self-pity.

Boom!

The next moment, the rampaging energies beneath the ground finally gathered sufficient momentum to burst forth.

Weng!

The ground began to tremor with astonishing intensity. Caught off guard by the sudden shaking, a couple of students standing by the edge of the depression lost their balance and fell to the ground.

Upon seeing such a sight, fear surfaced in the eyes of Wu shi and the others.

"It seems like this burst is far stronger than the ones before." Guild Leader Han's complexion turned incredibly awful as he shook his face in disbelief.

This burst of energies was clearly many times stronger than the ones before. The seal suppressing the burst of energies distorted menacingly under the immense pressure, as if it would be torn to shreds at any moment.

Even if every single person present were to devote their full strength to reinforcing the seal, it was still utterly impossible for them to suppress this burst of energies.

Just what in the world happened? Why would there suddenly be such a powerful burst of energies?

"It's over..." Guild Leader Han despaired.

They had barely hung on even when dealing with the weaker bursts of energies previously, so against such devastating force... Without a doubt, there was no way the seal could withstand this. The immense might would tear through the seal, inducing a massive explosion that would reduce everything within several thousand kilometers to dust!

Just when he thought that all hope was lost, Principal Zhang's voice suddenly sounded from above.

"Here, here. There's no need to tense up; it will be over once I put it in a little!"

Right after those words were spoken, the formation flag flew forward at an even greater speed, stabbing right into the node the other party had identified beforehand.

Hu!

As soon as the flag came into contact with the node, the imminently-exploding seal suddenly lost its ferocity, as if a wolfhound whose tail had been stepped on. With a pop, it abruptly calmed down, becoming as gentle as the placid waters of a roadside puddle.

Following which, a deafening blast sounded from the node, and an immense blast of energies burst toward the heavens. It was as if a hole had been pricked into a balloon, and the vast amount of gas trapped within, upon finally finding an escape route, hurriedly charged out of it. Due to the powerful blast, it felt as if the sky was going to be severed into two.

"This... the crisis has been resolved?" Guild Leader Han's body stiffened from shock. Unable to believe what he was seeing, he rubbed his eyes forcefully.

Wasn't that node the area where the energies were the most volatile? How could the energies be released so smoothly right after the formation flag was planted into it?

Guild Leader Han wasn't the only one who was perplexed by the situation before him. Liu Mo, who had only just returned from his long flight, was dumbfounded by what he saw right after his return as well.

Without using a compass or studying the terrain, the other party had simply picked up a formation flag and thrown it randomly... and the rampaging energies had been released just like that?

Is there really such a maneuver in the Way of Formations? Why am I unaware of it even after studying formations for so many years?

Liu Mo couldn't help but turn his eyes toward the students below, only to see them gazing at the sight before them with perfect nonchalance, as if knowing that their principal would be able resolve the rampaging energies easily.

He and his teacher had spent two whole days working on the formation, only to remain nearly as clueless as they had been at the start. On the other hand, the other party had casually planted a flag a few minutes after he arrived, and the crisis was resolved.

Could it be that when the other party said that they were dumb earlier... it wasn't intended as an insult toward them but a simple fact?

Just as Han Xu and Liu Mo were feeling deeply stifled within, they saw Zhang Xuan slowly descending from the sky before eventually stopping before his students.

"You have worked hard for the past two days. The problem here has been resolved, so quickly return and have a good rest!"

"Thank you, Principal Zhang!"

"I knew it; there is nothing in the world that Principal Zhang can't possibly resolve!"

"Guild Leader Han was prattling on about being a 7-star pinnacle formation master or something a while ago, but from the looks of it now, it doesn't seem like he is anything much."

"Well, it is usually the incapable who find a need to boast about their own abilities. Look at our Principal Zhang, despite the great capabilities he possesses, has he even bragged about them even once?"

"Indeed! Principal Zhang is simply too humble. I must learn from his example..."

...

Hearing the confirmation from their principal that the crisis had been resolved, a huge commotion broke out amid the crowd. Many faces reddened in agitation, and a huge number of students hurriedly sat onto the ground and began driving their cultivation technique to recuperate from their weakness and fatigue.

Two days of intense work had depleted them greatly, and quite a number of them had sustained significant internal injuries as a result.

However, it was fortunate that there was nothing too severe. With sufficient time, they would all be able to make a full recovery.

While the students were recuperating from their exertion, Zhang Xuan carefully assessed the condition of each individual student. Upon seeing any student whose injuries were too severe, he would step forward and treat them personally.

"No wonder... This explains why the students have unconditional trust in him, entrusting themselves to him without any hesitation at all. They don't just regard him as their principal, but their teacher, friend, and comrade as well..."

Witnessing this scene, Guild Leader Han and Liu Mo smiled bitterly. At this moment, they finally understood why the students had chosen to trust Zhang Xuan over them in the crucial moment.

As a principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other party's standing could be said to be even above theirs. Yet, such a figure was taking care of 4-star and 5-star master teachers meticulously without the slightest hint of impatience. Just this in itself was something that most weren't able to do.

"Alright..."

After confirming that his students were fine, Zhang Xuan returned to where Wu Shi and the others were standing. He turned his gaze toward Guild Leader Han and Liu Mo and clasped his fist hurriedly. "Please do pardon my previous insolence. It was a critical situation then, and I feared that any delay could result in a disastrous outcome."

"Principal Zhang, there is no need to apologize to us. We are the ones who have acted rashly." Guild Leader Han and Liu Mo's faces flushed crimson. If there was a hole in the ground at this moment, they would have surely leaped in without any hesitation.

Their intentions had been out of goodwill; a mistake in that situation could have easily resulted in a disastrous outcome. Yet, they had nearly caused everyone's death due to their incompetence. The guilt that they were feeling at this moment weighed down on them heavily.

It was fortunate that Principal Zhang had decisively commanded his students to knock them down in that moment, not bothering with etiquette. Otherwise... they would have gone down in history as sinners.

"It will take some more time for the energies to be released, and the seal isn't going to open anytime soon. Since that's the case, why don't we return to Firesource City for the time being and await the arrival of those from the Combat Master Hall?" Zhang Xuan proposed.

While the situation with the seal had been resolved, it would still take some time before they would be able to enter it. For one, it would take at least two to three days for the immense buildup of rampaging energies beneath the seal to disperse completely.

Furthermore, the members from the Combat Master Hall and the other three Master Teacher Academies hadn't arrived yet. To maximize the expedition's chances of success, it would be best for them to venture in only after the full team had arrived.

"Alright." Nodding, the crowd got onto an aerial saint beast and flew back to Firesource City.

Zhang Xuan and the others were settled into a huge manor that the regional Master Teacher Pavilion owned. As for the twenty thousand students, Zhang Xuan arranged for School Head Zhao and the others to take them back to the academy.

Threats were bound to be lurking throughout the ancient domain, and it would be too dangerous for the students to join the expedition as well.

A day later, the principals and elders of the other three Master Teacher Academies, as well as those from the Combat Master Hall, finally arrived.

Liao Song had escorted Zheng Yang to the Combat Master Hall headquarters and hadn't returned yet. However, two Saint 3-dan pinnacle Thousand Men Commanders had been dispatched instead.

"You are Principal Zhang?"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, one of the two Thousand Men Commander immediately emanated a deep aura of hostility.

He had heard about the Combat Master Hall's tragic defeat in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and he also knew that even though the cultivation of the young man before him was at Nascent Saint, his true fighting prowess was far greater than even combat masters like them.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Do you dare have a match with me?" the Thousand Men Commander challenged.

"A match?" A troubled look surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face.

All he wanted to do was keep a low profile and peacefully remain as the dashing young man he was in the background, was that really that much to ask for?

Being too outstanding sure was tiring!

"Indeed! Do you dare accept my challenge or not?" The Thousand Men Commander eyed Zhang Xuan provocatively.

"It is the first time we are meeting, and it won't do for us to sour our relationship with a match like that. Why don't you allow me to treat you to a drink instead?" Zhang Xuan took out a wine gourd and offered it to the other party earnestly.

However, the Thousand Men Commander shook his head and harrumphed coldly. "You don't want to accept my challenge? Very well. I will find a way to show you that the Combat Master Hall isn't an organization that anyone can humiliate!"

After which, he turned around and left.

Through asking around, Zhang Xuan learned that the name of the Thousand Men Commander was Feng Xun, and he was one of the more pro-combat members of the Combat Master Hall. When he heard that the combat masters who had gone to Hongyuan to assess the potential candidates had been thrashed instead, he couldn't help but feel great hostility toward the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. Ever since then, he had been wanting to spar with Zhang Xuan to regain the Combat Master Hall's dignity.

The other Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall went by the name of Jiang Yuan, and while he looked amicable on the surface, his eyes were filled with fighting will as well.

Combat masters had always been synonymous with the word 'invincible', and yet, they had actually suffered multiple setbacks when facing the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. As Thousand Men Commanders, they viewed it as their responsibility to recover the dignity of the Combat Master Hall.

Mu shi walked up to Zhang Xuan and explained, "Senior Uncle, our Qingyuan Conferred Empire has dispatched four men for this mission; me, Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and Liu Mo. As for the Combat Master Hall, other than Feng Xun, Jiang Yuan, and Zhuo Qingfeng, there are another twelve more combat masters. Last but not least, for the three Master Teacher Academies, the three principals have come with two elders each, making up nine people in total. All in all, our expedition team has a strength of around thirty or so."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Initially, Zhao Bingxu and the others had wanted to join the expedition team as well, but Zhang Xuan hadn't agreed to it.

The ancient domain was lurking with danger. Should something bad befall him, the Ten Great Master Teachers should at least be around to take care of the academy, or else it would fall into chaos.

"According to my calculations, the ancient domain will open tomorrow. We will be setting forth tomorrow morning," Mu shi said.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded.

After bidding Mu shi farewell, Zhang Xuan returned to his residence, and just as he was about to rest, he noticed Luo Ruoxin sitting on one of the stone seats in his courtyard. Her right elbow was pressed against the stone table, her right fist supporting her head. A contemplative look was on her face, but it was impossible to tell what she was thinking of.

Chapter 1019

Holding Hands

She seemed to be a little out of it, such that she didn't even notice when Zhang Xuan walked over. The brilliant moon cast a pale glow upon her body, making her appearance reminiscent of an ethereal fairy who could fly away in the next moment.

"To daze off like that, what are you thinking of?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

"Nothing much..." Recovering from her daze, Luo Ruoxin shook her head. Standing up, she glanced at the brilliant moon and asked, "Will you accompany for a walk outside?"

Zhang Xuan was taken aback by the request for a moment before delight captured his entire face. Without a second's delay, he replied excitedly, "Of course, it will be my pleasure too!"

Seeing the other party's excited expression, Luo Ruoxin shook her head with a helpless smile. "Do you display your emotions explicitly in everything else you do as well?"

Most people would usually try their best to conceal their delight before her, wanting to appear dignified and cultured. Yet, this fellow was the complete opposite. He was candid and straightforward, doing whatever was on his mind without any worry at all. His carefree personality sure was enviable.

"I..." The abrupt question left Zhang Xuan a little nervous. "Actually, I have been concealing something all this while..."

"Oh?" Hearing those words, Luo Ruoxin's interest was piqued. Turning her beautiful eyes to him, she said, "Tell me about it!"

"To be honest, I am a peaceful person who prefers to maintain a low profile, but things somehow never go the way I want them to..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Low profile?" Seeing how earnestly the other party was saying those words, Luo Ruoxin burst into laughter. The forlorn expression on her face from a moment ago

vanished from sight, and she couldn't help but remark, "You sure have concealed it well; I couldn't tell at all!"

No matter where that fellow went, he was always the brightest star in everyone's sight. There couldn't be anyone that was even more high profile than him... and yet, at this moment, he was actually saying that he was a peaceful person who preferred to maintain a low profile?

Where was his face?

She would usually be repulsed by such shamelessness, but for some reason, she didn't have such a reaction toward the young man beside her. On the contrary, being alongside the other party left her feeling very relaxed, bringing her tranquility.

At the other party's reaction, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I knew that you wouldn't believe me!"

He was truly a low-profile person in the depths of his heart, but fate just loved to play tricks on others. Too outstanding, he shone brightly like a firefly in the dark no matter where he went, unable to conceal his glow no matter what he did.

"Hahahaha!" Seeing the other party's serious response, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but chuckle once more.

Beneath the night sky, amid chatter, the duo walked out of the manor they were staying in.

The onset of the night had brought the scorching temperatures down considerably. Tempted by the cooling weather, those who had been hiding in their homes before stepped out of their doors, filling the streets with a huge crowd.

Zhang Xuan had no idea what kind of method Luo Ruoxin used to disguise herself, but despite her beautiful appearance, she didn't seem to stand out from the crowd. As such, while there were exclamations of marvel from time to time, they didn't catch too many eyes.

After walking a distance, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt and pointed forward. "Due to the peculiar climate of Firesource City, it has many unique delicacies that can't be found anywhere else. There is a tavern just ahead, so why don't we rest there for a moment and try out their local cuisine?"

Luo Ruoxin glanced ahead and saw a grand building. Above the entrance of the building hung a plaque with three words on it: 'Dream Reminiscence Tavern'.

"Life, a reminiscence of a dream. A lifetime of haste and worries, perchance better spent merrymaking with wine... What a poetic name!" Luo Ruoxin remarked meaningfully.

The interior of the tavern was extravagantly designed, but it had a warm atmosphere as well. The attendants that were moving around the place possessed a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan at the very least. With just a look, it was apparent that the tavern was anything but simple.

"Guests, this way please..." An attendant welcomed them before settling them into a table for two by the window.

Zhang Xuan shot Luo Ruoxin a glance, and only after confirming that the latter wasn't unhappy with this arrangement did he heave a sigh of relief and sit down.

"Bring us a plate of all of your specialties please."

"Sure thing!"

The attendant hurriedly left, and before long, a huge array of delicacies and a bottle of fine wine were spread out grandly on the table before them.

Zhang Xuan had to admit that the food and wine in this tavern were indeed excellent. The earth flames that Firesource City was rich in didn't just bring about superior weapons, it was also the key to the exceptionally fragrant wine they produced in the region. Just a single sip could make one addicted to it, craving more.

"This Golden Lake Carp is a unique species found only in the Golden Lake on the Swallow Embracing Mountain. It only reproduces once every ten years, making it very short in supply. It has no scales, and its flesh is particularly fresh too. It is best when steamed with yellow wine..."

"This is the liver of the Blue Sparrow. Just steam it with a slight touch of sesame oil, and it will be ready to be feasted upon. This dish is not only rich in spiritual energy, its taste is also top-notch..."

"This is the famous Greentip Bamboo Meat of Firesource City. Its main ingredient is

Greentip Bamboo, a plant that only grows in Firesource City. Once heated up, it will gain a texture reminiscent of bacon, giving a nice crisp to it..."

Zhang Xuan introduced the various dishes as they feasted on the food before them.

With just a taste, he could compile a book on each of them in the Library of Heaven's Path. Putting aside introducing the dishes, he could easily point out dozens of flaws in the cooking without repeating any points.

"You are a gourmet?" Luo Ruoxin was surprised to hear the other party's detailed introduction of the dishes.

Despite the young age of the man seated before her, he possessed strength far beyond his age, and his mastery of his supporting occupations was also formidable. It was almost as if there was nothing in the world that he was incapable of.

This was especially so for gourmet. It was one of the most inconspicuous occupations of the Lower Nine Paths, and they would usually only be responsible in trying out new dishes and introducing them to noble personages. As such, they didn't have much standing.

Thus, she couldn't help but be perplexed that the principal of a Master Teacher Academy would actually spend his time on studying it as well.

"I happen to have read some books on them in the past, so I do know a little bit here and there," Zhang Xuan explained.

"Impressive, you sure are well read," Luo Ruoxin complimented.

A stark contrast to Zhang Xuan wolfing down the food without the slightest bit of elegance, Luo Ruoxin ate gracefully in small mouthfuls. Her subtle mannerisms hinted at the fine upbringing she had.

...

After having their fill of good, Zhang Xuan turned to Luo Ruoxin and said, "If you have anything on your mind, perhaps speaking of it will make you feel better. My cultivation might be low, but I am still capable of resolving most problems."

He could tell that the other party had some troubles on her mind, and that was also

why he had been jesting around, hoping to put the other party in a better mood. However... it seemed like his efforts weren't really paying off.

"It's nothing much..." Luo Ruoxin paused for a brief moment before shaking her head. "It's just that I have met with some matters recently that made me a little homesick."

"Homesick? You... Are you really from one of the Sage Clans, the Luo Clan?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

There had been many rumors regarding Luo Ruoxin's true identity going around the Master Teacher Academy, the notable ones being that she was from the esteemed Luo Clan.

Otherwise, it didn't make sense for even a 7-star master teacher like Mu Shi to treat her so respectfully.

"Sage Clan?" The young lady shook her head with a smile, neither admitting nor denying it. Instead, she looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, "What about your family? Where are they? I haven't really heard you talking about them before."

Seeing that Luo Ruoxin was unwilling to speak of the matter, Zhang Xuan decided not to ask too much about it either. "I don't have any family members. I am an orphan."

"An orphan?" Luo Ruoxin was slightly stunned by the response.

"Un, I did not have any kin while growing up," Zhang Xuan said.

He had never met any of his kin after transcending from Earth. Not only so, his previous self also had no recollection of the sort.

It was through great hard work that his previous self had managed to become a teacher of Hongtian Academy, but even so... he had ended up causing his student's cultivation to go berserk and nearly had his license revoked!

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring it up," Luo Ruoxin hurriedly apologized.

"It's fine; I am already used to it. I'm quite happy with my situation. I am able to travel wherever I want to freely without any care in the world!" Zhang Xuan chuckled.

In a sense, he also liked his current lifestyle as well. Journeying through the world

freely, there was nothing to tie him down other than the couple of direct disciples he had.

"You sure are optimistic..." Luo Ruoxin could see in the other party's eyes that he was indeed enjoying the current life he had, and she nodded in approval.

Without any backing or connections, he had been able to rise to the position of the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy by the time he was twenty through his own hard work. While other party might seem unreliable at times, there was no doubt that he was a person worthy of respect.

Just by the unconditional trust the students had in him and the unwavering loyalty the academy elders showed him... all of this was testimony to his outstanding capability.

As long as he was around, even the most impossible of tasks could be resolved easily.

There were plenty of outstanding figures around her, and most of them were far stronger than the young man before her when they were at his age. However... that was due to their high starting point. Were they to start from the same origin, there would probably be less than a handful who could catch up to him!

To reach Nascent Saint pinnacle at such a young age and become the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, winning the unwavering loyalty of the students and acknowledgement of the world... his charisma was something that very few could match.

What particularly stood out was the other party's mental resilience. Even in the face of a crisis, he could retain his composure and resolve it perfectly. As long as he was given time to grow, there was no doubt that he would achieve great things in the future.

Unknowingly, Luo Ruoxin's view of the young man before her had changed tremendously.

In the past, she had only felt a peculiar intimacy toward him. However, as time passed, she had gradually realized that he possessed a radiance unmatched by anyone else in the world, leaving the others paling in comparison. Her eyes couldn't help but be drawn to him.

Unknowingly, the young man had stoked a peculiar sentiment within her.

It was just a sliver at the moment, but it was something that had never happened before.

"Let's return."

After chatting for a while longer, they began making their way back to the manor.

The brilliant moon hanging high in the night sky drew out long, slender shadows behind the both of them. A light breeze blew, and the faint fragrance of the young lady drifted in the air. It was a comfortable scent.

Zhang Xuan had never felt so tranquil before in his life. His hand stretched forward and touched the back of the young lady's hand. It felt soft and smooth, reminiscent of cotton.

Luo Ruoxin's body stiffened slightly as she instinctively retracted her hand and hugged it before her chest. With a reddened face, she exclaimed, "I will be going on ahead first!"

After saying those words, she rushed off. In an instant, she had already disappeared from view.

"She's gone," Zhang Xuan remarked lamentably. Slapping his forehead, he shook his head in utmost regret. "Why did I have to do that?"

If he hadn't reached out for her hand, he could still have been walking with her. Perhaps, they could have chatted a little longer. If the other party were to blame him for this matter, would they be unable to remain friends?

How could he have been so foolish!

Vexed, Zhang Xuan decided to just assess the other party's attitude tomorrow morning before deciding what he could do. Hopefully, if the other party wasn't too angry, he could just feign ignorance and get along with her as if nothing had happened.

Shaking his head, he was just about to make his way back to the manor when a sound suddenly echoed from the depths of the alley.

"Farewell, my kin and my friends. I have truly brought all of you great shame!"

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan walked over and saw a man in his early thirties kneeling before the entrance of a residence, grieving sorrowfully.

His body was covered with fresh blood, and his face was cloaked with a layer of dust, giving him an unkempt appearance. It was likely that he had just survived some kind of dangerous situation.

"Farewell!"

After kowtowing a few more times, the middle-aged man stood up. He flicked his wrist, and a sword appeared in his hands. He placed it against his neck as he prepared to slit his throat.

He is committing suicide? Not expecting to meet with a person trying to end his life while walking along the streets, Zhang Xuan hurriedly flicked his finger.

Weng!

A burst of light shot forth, and the sword was struck out of the man's grip. It pierced deeply into a nearby wall, vibrating endlessly.

Chapter 1020

Violetgilt Metal

Having his sword abruptly knocked flying, the middle-aged man was taken aback. He hurriedly turned his head around and saw a young man walking over.

"Even ants struggle to continue living, so why do you seek the end?" Zhang Xuan said.

Walking closer, he noted that the middle-aged man possessed a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 9-dan primary stage. With such strength, he could definitely be considered as an expert in Firesource City.

"I appreciate elder's concern, but I desire nothing more than death..." Knowing that a person who could flick his sword off his hand from a distance away was bound to be far stronger than him, the middle-aged man replied respectfully, not underestimating the other party just because of his young age.

Nevertheless, there was still a forlorn gaze in his eyes.

"To be able to cultivate to a level likes yours before thirty, you are quite an outstanding genius. What is it that left you in such deep despair, such that even living has become a chore to you?" Zhang Xuan asked, intrigued.

Even with the rich resources in Firesource City, a person who could reach Transcendent Mortal 9-dan before thirty could be considered to be an outstanding genius.

A person as talented as the other party had a bright future ahead of him, so why was he attempting to end his life?

"I really can't bring myself to continue living any longer..." The middle-aged man shook his head. "In Firesource City, a land rich in earth flames, the most respected occupation is blacksmith. From seven, I have been studying under Grandmaster Blacksmith Sun Jin as an apprentice. I thought that I would eventually be accepted as his student and rise to great heights... but who knew that I would fail the blacksmith examination for ten years consecutively! For twenty-four whole years, I have remained as a mere

apprentice... A person as dull-witted and incapable as me doesn't deserve to live. I have truly brought shame to my family members and the occupation..."

"You have been an apprentice for twenty-four years?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. "So... you aren't even a 1-star blacksmith at the moment?"

Going by the ranking standard, a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert should have been a 5-star pinnacle blacksmith at the minimum. Yet, to still remain as an apprentice... Was this for real?

Could there really be such an untalented person in the world?

"Un. Every time I attempt to forge a weapon, I will find myself being unable to control the temperature of the earth flames well, resulting in the metal ingot going to ruins... After the previous examination I had, my teacher finally couldn't stand in incompetence any longer and evicted me from his lineage. My family members are still anticipating the day which I become a blacksmith and bring glory to our family name, and yet, I ended up letting all of them down instead. What rights do I have to face the world..." The more the middle-aged man spoke about his matter, the more depressed he became.

Zhang Xuan was slightly surprised.

A Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert had been studying smithing ever since he was seven, and yet hadn't cleared the 1-star blacksmith examination even after twenty-four years of effort? No matter how untalented the other party was, surely it couldn't possibly be to such an extent?

If that was true, it wouldn't be too hard to imagine the despair the other party was feeling.

"But just what could have happened for him to be unable to clear even the 1-star blacksmith examination?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

It might be challenging for a Tongxuan realm 1 cultivator to clear the 1-star blacksmith examination, but as a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert, a person who had cultivated his soul and was capable of precise movements, how could the other party be incapable of smithing a Mortal-tier weapon and qualify as a 1-star blacksmith?

"I have no idea as well. Somehow, I am just unable to successfully smith a weapon."

the middle-aged man shook his head.

His multiple failures in the examination had sapped him of his confidence.

"Unable to smith a weapon?" Perplexed, Zhang Xuan looked at the middle-aged man before him with a frown and asked, "Can you smith the most basic weapon you know of for me?"

To think that a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert would be incapable of clearing even a mere 1-star blacksmith examination, this was something that was completely inconceivable to Zhang Xuan. It was simply ridiculous, there was no one out in the world who would dare believe this to be true.

"Elder, thank you for saving my life, but I have already made up my mind. Even if I were to smith that weapon, it won't change my mind. A person as useless as me will be better off dead!" the middle-aged man bowed deeply and said.

"There is plenty of time for you to seek the end, there is no need to rush into it now. I happen to be a rather experienced blacksmith myself, and I am intrigued by the problem you are afflicted by. Perhaps, if you show me your smithing process, I might just be able to identify the root of your problem and help you resolve it." Zhang Xuan said.

If the other party was determined on attempting suicide, there was nothing he could do about it. However, the fact that a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan was unable to qualify as a 1-star blacksmith after so many years of effort was bewildering to him, and he felt that there was a need to get to the bottom of it.

"This..." The middle-aged man hesitated.

"Since you are going to end your life anyway, it shouldn't matter, right? It won't be too late for you to do whatever you want to after I fail." Zhang Xuan smiled.

"...Very well then." The middle-aged man nodded.

Indeed. Since he was going to end his life, what did he have to lose?

"There is a chamber which I use for smithing weapons not too far away. All of the required items for smithing are there, so let's head over."

After saying these words, the middle-aged man led the way ahead. Not too long later, they arrived at a rather small chamber.

The chamber had everything that a blacksmith would need, be it earth flames or cauldron. There was a rack placed alongside one of the walls which was filled with a lot of ores. There were a couple of them that were extremely rare, such that it would be difficult to find them in the market. Despite the middle-aged man's low proficiency in smithing, it seemed like he was quite a collector of ores.

Assessing the area, Zhang Xuan's gaze suddenly fell on one of the ores, and his eyelids began twitching in shock.

"Is that... Violetgilt Metal?"

Violetgilt Metal was an extremely rare ore which could be infused into certain types of weapons to boost its might.

"Using this ore and a smithing technique that complements it, I will be able to induce a breakthrough in the Golden Origin Cauldron!" Zhang Xuan's eyes gleamed in agitation.

Having made a promise to the Golden Origin Cauldron back when the latter first submitted to him, he had been looking into the various methods of raising its strength. However, due to the lack of required ores, he had no choice but to put off the matter aside again and again.

Who could have thought that he would find the required ore here?

"I am going to start." Oblivious to Zhang Xuan's astonishment, the middle-aged man said nonchalantly before walking up to his weapon cauldron.

Driving his zhenqi, his hand grasped forward to draw the earth flames from the ground.

A searing blaze surged into the chamber, and under the overwhelming heat, the chamber walls glowed crimson. The middle-aged man flicked his wrist and took out a metal hammer. After which, he grabbed a piece of iron and placed it into the cauldron.

A few moments later, after the iron had softened under the intense heat, he began to hammer it.

Ding ding dang dang!

Under the powerful hammering, it didn't take long for the iron ingot to be shaped into a sharp sword.

Zhang Xuan had to acknowledge that the middle-aged man had reached an incredible mastery in his forging skills, superior to even a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith like him.

Soon, after the shaping of the weapon was finally forged, the middle-aged man extended his hand forward once more, intending to draw earth flames to temper the weapon. Yet, at this moment, the earth flames suddenly ran out of control. It rushed forward with astonishing ferocity, reducing the freshly forged weapon back into a pile of metallic fluid, thus rendering his previous efforts futile.

"Failure again... I knew that I couldn't possibly succeed..." Sighing deeply, despondency surfaced in the middle-aged man's eyes.

He couldn't help but wish for a miracle to happen each time he forged. Perhaps, he might just succeed this time. Yet, like many times before, his prayers hadn't come true.

"This..."

In contrast to the middle-aged man despondency, Zhang Xuan frowned after seeing the other party's smithing process.

With his eye of discernment, even without the Library of Heaven's Path, he was still able to easily see through the issues in the other party's smithing.

There wasn't any significant mistake in the other party's forging, but as for the tempering... It appeared that there was a conflict between the other party's zhenqi and the earth flames, resulting in the other party's inability to control the earth flames. As a result, the earth flames ended up running out of control, devouring the forged weapon clean...

To put it in other words, the issue lay in not what the other party had done but the internal condition of his body. The zhenqi in the other party's body happened to have an attribute that was at odds with the earth flames, causing the earth flames to run amok. This was also the reason why the forged weapon ended up becoming a pile of metallic liquid when he attempted to temper it, rendering his efforts futile.

"Surely a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith should be able to tell that there is a conflict between his zhenqi and the earth flames?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

What that had left Zhang Xuan baffled wasn't how difficult it was to discern the middle-aged man's problem but how easy it was to do so. It was understandable that the middle-aged man wasn't aware of it as he wasn't even a 1-star blacksmith yet, thus he wasn't qualified to access books beyond that of an apprentice. However, there was no way a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith could be oblivious to it.

It was fundamental knowledge for them!

But if so, why didn't the Sun Jin person whom the other party spoke about inform the other party of the matter? Why didn't he try to correct the other party's flaw?

"Wait a moment..." As Zhang Xuan contemplated over the matter, his eyebrows suddenly leaped up.

The reason why a conflict would occur was due to one's cultivation technique being incompatible with the earth flames, but if the middle-aged man had started learning smithing from that Sun Jin person ever since he was seven, how could he still suffer from such a fundamental issue?

"Unless it was done on purpose..." Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed into slits.

Given the circumstances surrounding the middle-aged man, the only possible reasoning for such a situation was that someone had intentionally taught him the wrong cultivation technique from the start.

But... what did that person have to gain from teaching him the wrong cultivation technique?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan scanned the room to see if he could find any clues when a thought suddenly surfaced in his mind.

Turning to the middle-aged man, he asked, "Are you the one who found these ores?"

"That's right." The middle-aged man nodded, slightly baffled by Zhang Xuan's abrupt question. "Due to the high concentration of earth flames around Firesource City, there are plenty of ores in the area... Through the natural affinity between the ores and my zhenqi, I am able to locate them quite easily."

"Natural affinity between the ores and your zhenqi?"

"That's right. Our cultivation techniques are imparted by Sun Jin laoshi. As long as we cultivate hard, we will gain a keen sensitivity towards ores, allowing us to find them easily..." The middle-aged man nodded.

"We? Are there many who cultivate the same cultivation technique as you?" Zhang Xuan asked.

The middle-aged man contemplated for a brief moment before replying, "There are. There are around thirty apprentices who had studied alongside me back then. However, most of them were devoured by the earth flames while searching for ores, so there are only me and another one left."

"Is the other surviving person unable to become a blacksmith as well?" As if having come to a realization, Zhang Xuan asked grimly.

"That's right. He's a year older than me, and unable to stand the shame from consecutive failure, he eventually succumbed to the pressure and ended his life last year..." Recalling the fate of his companion, the middle-aged man shook his head and sighed.

To be unable to qualify as a blacksmith even after studying for so many years, it wasn't too difficult to imagine how despondent the other party must have felt.

"Committed suicide?" Zhang Xuan was astonished. He took a sweeping gaze around the room before asking, "Then... where do the ores you collect go to? Surely there should be more than this?"

Since the middle-aged man had an uncanny ability to locate ores, he must have found many of them in the past twenty-four years of his life. He should have collected far more ores than those present in the room.

"I did collect quite a lot, but most of them have gone to Sun Jin laoshi as tuition fee. He has taught me ever since I was young, imparting me much valuable knowledge. Even though I was still unable to become a blacksmith in the end, I am still deeply indebted to him. It is only right that I pay tuition fee to him." the middle-aged man replied.

"Tuition fee?" I see, I finally get it!" Having finally made sense of the entire story, a chilling glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes. In that instant, his face turned

terrifyingly cold.

Chapter 1021

The Despicable Sun Jin

After hearing those words, Zhang Xuan confirmed that that Blacksmith Sun Jin whom the other party spoke of had never intended to take the middle-aged man as his disciple in the first place. From the start to the end, that Sun Jin fellow had only regarded the other party as a mere tool for procuring ores!

In the gaps between the tectonic plates, valuable ores were usually produced alongside earth flames. As such, in places where earth flames could be found, there were bound to be plenty of valuable ores as well.

That Sun Jin fellow had intentionally made the middle-aged man cultivate a zhenqi that was at odds with the earth flames, thus making it easier for the other party to sense areas rich in earth flames. But cultivating such a cultivation technique meant that the latter would be unable to control the earth flames, making it impossible to smith!

In other words, Sun Jin had never intended to allow the middle-aged man to become a blacksmith!

Working as a blacksmith might have been lucrative, but selling those ores was even more so!

For a teacher to commit such an atrocity... Zhang Xuan was enraged.

It was one thing if he had never encountered it, but now that he had, there was no way he could let the other party off!

Black sheep like this had to be weeded from society!

Even though the other party wasn't a master teacher, he had assumed the name of a teacher to intentionally misguide others. This was completely unacceptable!

The thirty apprentices who had come under Sun Jin's tutelage alongside the middle-aged man had thought that they could rise to glory with a great 6-star blacksmith

teaching them personally. Yet, due to Sun Jin's misguidance, their dreams had been shattered. Most of them had ended up dying while searching for ores for him, and even the fortunate survivor had ended up ending his life from the sheer despair of being unable to become a blacksmith.

To Sun Jin, they were probably just disposable pawns. As mere apprentices, they weren't qualified to learn his true teachings. Thus, their inability to become blacksmiths didn't harm his reputation by too much. On the contrary, the others might even think that it was those apprentices who were lazy and incapable, being unable to achieve anything despite coming under the tutelage of an esteemed 6-star pinnacle blacksmith.

Most likely, it was such overwhelming criticism that eventually pushed the middle-aged man to take the final step.

Had Zhang Xuan not heard of it himself, he would never have dared believe that there could be such a contemptible individual in the Firesource City Blacksmith Guild.

Those who imparted their teachings and dispelled the doubts of others were granted the noble title 'teacher'.

As an esteemed blacksmith, an Upper Nine Paths occupation, if Sun Jin had attempted to search for mercenaries to gather ores for him, he would surely have been able to do so easily. Just that, being found doing so could possibly sully his reputation, and the profits he stood to earn would be significantly lower as well. Whereas, by accepting a few apprentices and pretending to be a teacher to them, their act of gathering ores for him could be justified as filial piety, allowing him to take them for free without suffering the condemnation of others. On top of that, he could also conveniently toss them aside once he was done with them, and this was indeed what he had done.

"Despite studying under a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith for so many years, I am still unable to smith even the most basic Mortal weapon. No matter where I go, I am viewed with disdain by others, such that even my family members were mocked due to my incompetence. If all my existence does is bring shame to others, I might as well end my life right here, right now!" Seeing the elder before him fall into deep contemplation, the middle-aged man thought that the other party wasn't able to find a solution to his problem as well, and disappointment crept into his eyes.

It was one thing if he was the only one being mocked, but for his family members to

have to face mockery from the public due to him... this was something that he couldn't accept!

Seeing that the middle-aged man had lost all fighting will within him, Zhang Xuan shook his head and consoled him. "There's no need to get so downhearted. I have already identified the root problem as to why you are unable to smith. As long as you trust me, I will help you resolve your problem. Not only so, I will help you advance to become a 5-star or even a 6-star blacksmith!"

But as much as those words were consolation, they weren't lies. He did possess the ability to do so.

It might have been difficult for others to alter a cultivation technique, but with the sharp eye of discernment and vast knowledge that Zhang Xuan possessed, creating a new cultivation technique to resolve the flaws of the current one that the other party was cultivating wasn't entirely impossible.

Of course, Zhang Xuan had to first find out what kind of cultivation technique the middle-aged man was cultivating first.

Zhang Xuan had used his Eye of Insight to carefully assess the middle-aged man when he smithed earlier, and it seemed like the cultivation technique that the other party had been taught was incomplete. As the information he received he wasn't complete, he had to obtain the full copy so as to ensure that nothing would go wrong.

"Become a 5-star or 6-star blacksmith?" The middle-aged man was stunned for a moment after hearing those words before shaking his head, and the disappointment in his eyes deepened further.

He had thought that, considering the immense capability that the elder before him had displayed, the other party might have had a way to resolve his problem. Yet, who could have known that the other party would end up spouting such nonsense?

A person who was incapable of even smithing the most basic Mortal-tier weapon, how could he possibly ever become a 5-star or even 6-star blacksmith?

Wasn't this a mere daydream?

The middle-aged man turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan and spoke with an immensely weak and bitter voice. "Do you find my plight very hilarious? Are you here

to make a mockery of me before I end my life?"

"Make a mockery of you?"

Zhang Xuan hadn't expected to hear such words from the other party's mouth, and he was dumbfounded for a moment. However, it didn't take him long to understand the rationale behind the other party's words.

To tell a man who had failed the 1-star blacksmith examination for twenty-four years straight that he could become a 5-star or 6-star blacksmith, it was no wonder the other party would think that he was mocking him.

Without explaining anything, Zhang Xuan spoke with a confident smile on his face. "Don't worry, I don't have the habit of making empty promises. I mean what I say."

If it still didn't work out at the end, he could always just destroy the other party's cultivation and impart a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art to him. Even though the middle-aged man was at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, even if he started cultivating from scratch, it wouldn't take too long.

"You mean what you say? A feat that even Sun Jin laoshi is unable to achieve, how do you expect me to believe you? Are you really a blacksmith?" A hint of doubt surfaced in the middle-aged man's eyes.

Any blacksmith would understand the difficulties in advancing through the ranks, and yet, the other party spoke of reaching 5-star and 6-star as if it was a mere walk in the park. Wasn't that clearly boasting?

"Of course!" Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out his blacksmith emblem, and six brilliant stars shone brightly on it.

"You are a... 6-star blacksmith?"

The middle-aged man was stunned to see the emblem, but a moment later, he shook his head and said, "I don't believe you. There is a chance that the emblem might belong to someone else, or it might even be a fake altogether. Unless you smith... a Spirit pinnacle weapon before my eyes, you won't be able to convince me that you are a 6-star blacksmith!"

It was inevitable that the middle-aged man would be skeptical of Zhang Xuan. All of

the 6-star blacksmiths he had encountered were at least in their fifties, so it was hard for him to even fathom that a young man in his twenties could possibly reach such a height.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was slightly stunned by the other party's sudden request.

He had received his blacksmith emblem fair and square through an examination at the Master Teacher Academy. Naturally, it was nothing much for him to show his ability to the other party.

What he had to do now was to win the other party's trust first. Otherwise, if the other party were to insist on ending his life, there would be nothing he could do.

"Why? You aren't able to smith anything at all? So, the words you have said are all lies to console me?" Noting Zhang Xuan's hesitation, the eyes of the middle-aged man turned despondent.

"Of course not, smithing a weapon means nothing to me!" Seeing that he could very well lose the other party's trust if he didn't show his ability, Zhang Xuan replied with a slight smile and stepped forward.

"Allow me to use your ores!"

Saying that, Zhang Xuan walked up to the rack by the wall and casually selected four different ores before tossing them into the cauldron not too far away.

After which, he drove his zhenqi, and the earth flames immediately surged up, scorching the four ores crimson. In just a moment, they began melting. The impurities contained within the ore were burned away, leaving behind the refined metal glowing brilliantly within the cauldron.

The four ores were extremely rare commodities in the world, each of them worth a fortune. Probably, only in a place like Firesource City could one take out all four of them so easily.

Through skillfully maneuvering his zhenqi, Zhang Xuan slowly pushed the four ores together, fusing them. As he did so, he turned to the middle-aged man with a slight smile on his face and said, "The easiest segment in smithing a weapon is the forging 1 phase. This phase happens to be the most time-consuming as well, so I will just skip that."

As he spoke, Zhang Xuan gathered zhenqi at the tips of his finger and abruptly shot it into the searing earth flames. The freshly fused alloy flew out of the cauldron and into a quench 2 bath not too far away.

Tzzzzzzzz!

Smoke puffed into the air.

Shortly after, Zhang Xuan raised his hand and grasped; a huge lump of metal appeared before his eyes.

"This is... a weapon?" Looking at the metal lump, the middle-aged man's lips twitched uncontrollably.

Putting aside mere apprentices, even a pig could probably forge something way better than that.

With a bizarre look on his face, the middle-aged man casually took the weapon, intrigued by the monstrosity that the other party had smithed. The next moment, however, his eyes narrowed in astonishment.

His proficiency in smithing wasn't too high, but having pursued a 6-star blacksmith for more than twenty years, he still possessed a decent eye for weapons.

As ugly and revolting as the metal lump looked, there was no doubt that it was a Spirit pinnacle weapon.

To casually pick up a few ores and forge a Spirit pinnacle weapon within less than a minute... What kind of frightening ability was this?

If he could smith such a powerful weapon without paying any heed to the meticulous details, once he got serious... what kind of formidable weapons would he be able to smith?

"I apologize for doubting you!" The middle-aged man hurried forward and kneeled onto the floor.

At this moment, he felt nothing but awe and respect for the other party!

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though he was a real 6-star pinnacle blacksmith through and through, his ability was limited to only refining the ores and quenching. As for the most basic forging... it was regrettable, but he knew nothing about it at all.

As a result, all he could forge at the moment were metal lumps. Anything more complicated than that was beyond his capability.

Nevertheless, that was more than sufficient for him to gain the other party's trust.

Seeing that he had won the other party's unreserved trust, Zhang Xuan said, "Alright. Now that I have verified my identity to you, you should be willing to listen to my instructions now, right? If it works out, not only will you become a full-fledged blacksmith, the facade of a certain hypocrite will be unmasked as well!"

"The facade of a certain hypocrite will be unmasked?" The middle-aged man couldn't comprehend the nuance of these words.

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded. "May I know where the Blacksmith Sun Jin you spoke of is the moment?"

"He... He should be at the Blacksmith Guild," the middle-aged man replied.

"Bring me to him. Later on, regardless of what I say or do, I want you to remain silent by the side. Don't interject, and act only on my command," Zhang Xuan instructed.

As the principal of a Master Teacher Academy, he couldn't allow poisonous tumors like Sun Jin to continue their tyranny. He had to expose the other party's misdeeds publicly, or else who knew how many more people would end up in the same pitiful plight as the middle-aged man before him?

On top of protecting humanity, master teachers had the duty to protect the sanctity of teaching. The solemnity of lineages mustn't be undermined by a couple of black sheep in society!

"Yes!" The middle-aged man nodded.

Just as the other party had said, as a person who was already prepared to die, what else did he have to fear? Perhaps, just perhaps... if the young man before him really could bring a miracle to him and resolve his problem, he could finally be freed from the abyss of despair that he had been gradually sinking deeper and deeper into over

the years.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to walk out of the room, he suddenly halted and pointed toward the Violetgilt Metal on the rack.

"Bring this ore with us. We will use it later!"

The middle-aged man nodded and stowed it in his storage ring before leading the way to the Blacksmith Guild.

With the Blacksmith Guild located just three streets away, it didn't take the duo too long to arrive at their destination.

Darkness had already set upon the sky of Firesource City, but as the base of operations for the most popular occupation in the city, the Blacksmith Guild was still brightly-lit, and huge crowds walked in and out of its entrance.

Chapter 1022

Causing Trouble

When they reached the guild's entrance, the middle-aged man fell silent for a brief moment before saying, "Sun Jin laoshi is one of the most capable blacksmiths in the guild, and he has many disciples and followers. As a mere apprentice, an evicted one at that, I have no right to bring you to him."

Due to the rich earth flames around Firesource City, blacksmiths and apothecaries were particularly respected in the region. In a sense, they could be considered nobles there, existences whom the average civilians could never hope to make an appointment with. This was especially so for a blacksmith of Sun Jin's caliber.

"You have no right? Don't worry, I will bring you right to him!" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan swiftly uncovered Sun Jin's location before leading the way over.

The Firesource City Blacksmith Guild was bustling. The main hall was packed with sellers and buyers of weapons alike. 1-star and 2-star blacksmiths were serving as attendants in the area, attending to the customers and bringing about order to the crowd.

After walking for a while, they soon arrived before a relatively vast room. Just as they were about to make their way in, two 4-star blacksmiths walked up to them, and upon recognizing the middle-aged man following behind Zhang Xuan, they sneered coldly.

"I was just wondering who this is. Isn't this our great Song Zhen, who still remains as an apprentice even after twenty long years? What? Are you unwilling to give up, so you wish to give it another try?"

"It doesn't matter. No matter how many times you take the examination, trash is trash; you can't change your nature regardless of how much you try!"

Disdainful smiles were plastered on the faces of the duo. Clearly, they were well aware of the affairs surrounding the middle-aged man.

"I..." Hearing the sneers, the face of the middle-aged man, Song Zhen, paled. He opened

his mouth to speak, but eventually, he closed it without saying a word.

"Alright, you should stop making a fool out of yourself here and scram. Our teacher has no intention of meeting you, so it doesn't matter how many times you come here!" One of the two 4-star blacksmiths waved his hands impatiently.

Song Zhen was about to explain the situation when Zhang Xuan suddenly raised his hand, stopping him. After which, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the duo and said, "He isn't the one who wants to meet your teacher; it's me. Get Sun Jin out here to receive me!"

"You want our teacher to receive you? Who do you think you are?" Hearing the arrogant words spoken by the young man before him, one of the 4-star blacksmiths guarding the door harrumphed coldly, the disdain in his eyes reflected clearly for all to see.

Given his teacher's standing, even the city lord of Firesource City had to submit a visiting scroll in advance before paying a visit. Yet, this twenty-year-old fellow actually dared to speak such haughty words, wanting his teacher to receive him. The ignorant sure were fearless!

"I will give you three counts to get out of my way, or else I will toss you out myself!" The other blacksmith threatened menacingly.

Seeing that the duo wasn't planning on letting him enter, Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "Since he has no intentions on receiving me, it seems like I will just have to go in by myself."

Right after saying those words, Zhang Xuan turned his eyes away from the duo and began making his way into the room.

As the principal of the Master Teacher Academy, not even a 7-star master teacher would dare to keep him waiting outside.

Seeing that the young man was trying to barge in forcefully, the faces of the two 4-star blacksmiths warped in astonishment.

"Audacious! What are you trying to do?"

They hurried forward to block the young man's path as they raised their palm,

prepared to make a move.

However, before they could launch their strike, an overwhelming might crashed down upon them.

Peng peng!

The duo was knocked flying simultaneously before crashing heavily into the wall. Their faces reddened, and fresh blood spewed from their mouths.

With just a look, Zhang Xuan could tell that this wasn't the first time that the two 4-star blacksmiths had oppressed others. Toward such people, he had no intention on holding back at all. With a simple exertion of his zhenqi, the duo was already severely wounded.

The two of them were only at Cosmos Bridge realm, so it was only natural that they wouldn't even be able to withstand a simple exertion of zhenqi from Zhang Xuan.

Struggling to his feet, one of the 4-star blacksmiths exclaimed, "Someone is trying to barge in forcefully!"

His voice was very loud, and it swiftly resounded through the main hall of the Blacksmith Guild.

"Someone is trying to barge in? What is going on?"

Countless pairs of eyes turned toward them.

However, Zhang Xuan paid those curious gazes no heed at all, proceeding in with an impassive look on his face.

Song Zhen had thought that the other party was paying a visit to the Blacksmith Guild to find a solution to his problem, but who could have known that the other party would forcefully barge in in such a manner? Horrified, he couldn't help but cower in fear. However, after a moment of hesitation, he clenched his jaws in determination and decided to follow behind the other party.

No matter what, it was apparent that the other party was doing it for him, so how could he back away at this moment?

On the other hand, noting that Song Zhen had decided to follow behind him, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Even though he was determined on bringing judgement upon Sun Jin today, it could pose some trouble to him should Song Zhen choose to back down at this crucial moment.

"Trying to barge into our Blacksmith Guild? You are seeking death!"

"Quick, stop that fellow!"

Hearing the shouting from the 4-star blacksmith, seven middle-aged men within the room hurried forward to surround Zhang Xuan.

Dressed in their blacksmith robes, there were either four or five gleaming stars on the emblems pinned in front of their chests, indicating their ranks. Without any hesitation, they drew their weapons and launched an assault at the two intruders.

As the occupation that was second only to master teachers in Firesource City, blacksmiths had their pride and dignity to uphold. Any action that undermined the prestige of the Blacksmith Guild had to be dealt with sternly to show others that blacksmiths weren't to be trifled with. Thus, upon hearing that someone was forcefully barging into the Blacksmith Guild, their first thought was to apprehend the other party before anything else.

Seeing the seven middle-aged man assaulting him without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan sneered coldly, "Noisy!"

Without even shooting them a glance, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and continued walking forward.

Peng peng peng peng!

The crowd who had rushed forward to attack him were all knocked back. The stronger the attack was, the more forceful the counterattack against them was. Under the immense impact, their faces paled, and blood spurted from their mouths.

As 5-star blacksmiths, their cultivation had already reached Transcendent Mortal 8-dan or 9-dan. Yet, despite their strength, they had still been sent flying just like that, as if saying that they weren't even qualified to be considered an opponent to Zhang

Xuan.

Seeing the entire sight from behind, Song Zhen's face paled in astonishment, and his body began trembling.

Back when the other party flicked away the sword in his hand, he had already known that the other party was a powerful expert. However, he didn't think that the other party would be so fearsome!

The strongest expert he had met ever since he was young was the guild leader of the Blacksmith Guild. Yet, to his shock, he realized that the young man before him seemed to be even stronger than the guild leader of the Blacksmith Guild!

"Quick, someone is trying to barge in..."

Hualala!

Right after the seven of them fell to the ground, another group of men rushed in. They were all 5-star blacksmiths as well, and as soon as they entered the room, they immediately launched a torrent of attacks toward Zhang Xuan. However, just like before, the attacks were completely ineffective. A moment later, they were left lying on the ground as well.

After striking down three waves of guards, the duo finally arrived at the lounge.

"Song Zhen, what do you mean by this?" Right after stepping into the lounge, they saw an old man glancing over in their direction with fury blazing in his eyes.

There were two 6-star blacksmiths standing beside the old man.

"I..." Upon seeing the old man, Song Zhen's face paled. As if the other party's authority had been marked deep into his bones, he found himself unable to speak a word at all.

"We don't mean anything much; we are just here to ask if you manage to sleep well at night. You filled your apprentices with hope, only to usher them toward despair. Don't you feel the slightest guilt within you?" Zhang Xuan walked straight toward the main seat in the lounge before turning a heavy gaze toward the old man.

The old man's cheeks twitched slightly, and with a face livid with rage, he bellowed, "Who are you? This is the Blacksmith Guild, not a place where you can fool around!"

"Fool around?" Zhang Xuan shook his head with a wry smile before turning a sharp gaze toward the old man. "I am here to return justice to Song Zhen!"

One of the 6-star blacksmiths standing beside the old man stepped forward and sneered coldly. "Return justice to Song Zhen? What justice does he need? Despite studying under Sun Jin laoshi for more than twenty years, he hasn't even managed to clear his 1-star blacksmith examination yet. What justice does that trash need? It's only because of Sun Jin laoshi's magnanimity that he was allowed to remain here for so long. Otherwise, the Blacksmith Guild would have long chased scum like him out of its doors!"

The 6-star blacksmith seemed to be in his early forties, and he possessed a cultivation of Nascent Saint as well. The gaze that he directed toward Song Zhen was filled with mockery and disgust.

"I am talking to Sun Jin, who do you think you are to interject in our conversation?" Zhang Xuan's face darkened. "Kneel down!"

Kacha!

All of a sudden, the 6-star blacksmith felt an immense might crushing down on him. Without any time to react at all, his knees caved him, leaving him kneeling helplessly on the ground.

"How dare you cause trouble here? Who in the world gave you the guts to do so?" Seeing his companion being forced to kneel on the ground, the other 6-star blacksmith flew into a rage. Bellowing furiously, he whipped out a sword and charged right toward Zhang Xuan.

As the sword pierced through the air, a freezing gust of wind seemed to permeate the entire room. Even though the 6-star blacksmith only possessed a cultivation of Saint 1-dan primary stage, the sword in his hand had reached the level of Spirit pinnacle!

Through the augmentation of his sword, even a Saint 1-dan intermediate cultivator would find it hard to stand against him.

Facing the other party's ferocious assault, Zhang Xuan flicked his finger casually, and the sword immediately flew out of the other party's hand. In the next moment, the sword flew into his hands, and with a resounding 'ding!', the sword had acknowledged its new master.

Pu!

Seeing his personal weapon taking another man as its master, the face of the 6-star blacksmith turned ghastly pale, as if he had seen a ghost. Stifled by the sight he had just seen, a huge mouthful of blood spurted from his mouth.

"Who in the world are you?" Seeing how the young man was able to incapacitate one of his students with a word and have a Spirit pinnacle weapon acknowledge him as its master with a flick of his finger, Sun Jin's face finally turned grave.

"Like I said, I am here to return justice for Song Zhen." Zhang Xuan turned his cold gaze toward Sun Jin. "Do I really need to point it out explicitly to you?"

"I have taught Song Zhen for more than twenty years, and yet, he still wasn't able to become a 1-star blacksmith. What business is it of mine that his talent is mediocre?" Sun Jin spat through gritted teeth.

"You are saying that it has nothing to do with you?" Picking his ear leisurely, a look of disappointment surfaced on Zhang Xuan's face. "I don't like to hear those words. Tell me the truth."

"You..." Seeing that the other party wasn't about to let the matter rest easily, veins began popping out of Sun Jin's temper. With a frown of displeasure, he harrumphed. "What I said is the truth. There is nothing I can do about his lack of talent. If you don't believe me, you can ask Song Zhen about the matter yourself. A person who can't even smith a Mortal-tier weapon, what can I possibly do to help him?"

"It seems like speaking the truth is something very difficult for you. Since that's the case, why don't I share something with you? Perhaps it might help you jot your memory..."

Gazing deeply at Sun Jin, Zhang Xuan said calmly, "The cultivation technique he practices is suited for finding ores, but it happens to be in conflict with earth flames, thus making it impossible for him to smith. Can you tell me what is going on here?"

"This..." Sun Jin was astonished to hear those words, but he didn't allow it to show on his face. Nevertheless, his fists couldn't help but clench tightly behind his back. "He is just an ordinary apprentice; how would I know what kind of cultivation technique he practices? Do you expect a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith like me to bother myself with even the cultivation technique of a mere apprentice?"

"You..." Those words seemed to have triggered an explosion in Song Zhen's face. With a face scarlet with agitation, he exclaimed, "But you were the one who imparted my cultivation technique to me! You even offered me many pointers so as to ensure that I wouldn't err... How can you possibly be unaware of it!"

Chapter 1023

Twisted

The cultivation technique that he practiced had been personally taught to him by Sun Jin. Every time he met with a problem in his cultivation, Sun Jin would always step in personally to guide him. This was also the reason he was extremely grateful to the other party, and he felt deeply guilty that he had brought shame to the other party's name. That was also one of the major contributing reasons he had eventually decided to end his life.

Yet, why was the other party denying it now?

"Nonsense!" Sun Jin flung his sleeves and harrumphed coldly. "You aren't my direct disciple or even my student, you are just a mere apprentice. Who do you think you are for me to impart a cultivation technique to you and even personally guide you along?"

"I..." Song Zhen's body shook in disbelief.

He wanted to scream that what he had said was the truth and that he wasn't lying. Yet, he wasn't able to find any way to refute the other party's words at all.

Back then, when he first learnt that cultivation technique, the other party had told him that it was a very formidable technique and that others might attempt to lay their hands on it should they learn of its existence. As such, he had hidden the nature of his cultivation technique very well for the past twenty-four years. Who could have known that it was a trap laid by the other party from the very start? At this point, there was no way he could explain it anymore.

After all, given his identity, it was indeed irrational to think that a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith would devote time to guiding him personally.

"I have taught you for more than twenty years, and this is how you return my kindness? To actually bring someone over to injure my disciples... Song Zhen, I must have been blind to have taken you in back then!" Sun Jin bellowed furiously.

"You are going overboard with your acting." Seeing how the other party's disposition

was growing stronger and stronger with each word spoken, as if he was the one who had the moral high ground, Zhang Xuan tapped his finger on the table beside him impatiently. "Since you are unwilling to speak the truth, I guess I'll just have to find some other way to get it out of you."

After saying that, Zhang Xuan flicked his finger.

Peng!

As if struck by a sudden streak of lightning, Sun Jin's figure retreated swiftly into the distance before coughing violently on the ground, and fresh blood spouted from his mouth.

"You..." Not expecting the other party to make a move against him, overpowering him with a mere strike of his finger, Sun Jin's body trembled in disbelief.

Arrogant! The other party was too arrogant!

This was the Blacksmith Guild they were in!

To barge in and attack him fearlessly, did the other party think that the Blacksmith Guild was just for show?

Wiping his finger on his sleeve, as if disgusted by how dirty it was, Zhang Xuan gazed down coldly upon the fallen Sun Jin. "How about it now? Do you recall anything yet?"

"You..." Sun Jin clenched his jaws tightly as his face flushed crimson. Knowing that he couldn't admit to the matter at any cost, he bellowed back, "All that I have said is the truth!"

"The truth?"

"That's right! He's just a mere apprentice, a person who hasn't even qualified as a 1-star blacksmith yet. How can he be qualified to have me lie for him?" At this point, a look of savagery surfaced in Sun Jin's eyes as he roared, "And you! Regardless of who you are, to dare to act so arrogantly in the Blacksmith Guild, I have to say, you are a goner!"

Had Zhang Xuan not known about Song Zhen's affairs in advance, he might very well have fallen for Sun Jin's act. However, having learned of the atrocities that Sun Jin had

committed over the years, he didn't have the slightest shred of pity for the other party. Shaking his head in disappointment, he said, "It seems like you are unwilling to speak after all!"

To be honest, Sun Jin was indeed a very crafty person. Knowing that he would be severely punished if he were to be caught misguiding his apprentice, he had prepared in advance so as to absolve himself of any blame.

As long as he refused to admit that he had taught Song Zhen his cultivation technique, there was no one who would be able to do anything to him.

After all, the previous batch of apprentices whom he had imparted the cultivation technique to had nearly died out. There was nothing that the other party could possibly find to utilize against him.

But while such a mean might be effective in fooling others, there was no way it would work on Zhang Xuan.

If he really wanted the other party to speak, he could easily find several dozen methods to do so.

The only reason he hadn't done so was give the other party an opportunity.

"What I am saying is the truth," Sun Jin insisted adamantly, but before he could finish his words, he felt another aching sensation at his chest, and he was sent flying once more. The injuries he had sustained this time around was even more severe; it felt as if something had mashed his internal organs together. He lay weakly on the ground, unable to get back up.

"How is it? You still can't remember?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"It will make no difference even if you kill me. If you dare kill me, you will definitely be chased to the end of the world by the Blacksmith Guild," Sun Jin roared angrily.

He knew deeply that he couldn't admit to it. The moment that he did so, he could very well be sentenced to death by the guild. On the other hand, if he were to deny it vehemently, there would be nothing the other party could do, having no evidence on hand.

"Since you desire to die, allow me to grant your wish!"

Zhang Xuan flicked his finger once more, and a surge of sword qi flew toward Sun Jin.

"Hold it right there!" At this instant, a loud bellow sounded, and three white-bearded elders entered the room. Upon seeing the surge of sword qi, they hurriedly rushed forward to deflect it.

Dressed in conventional blacksmith robes, there was an emblem with six gleaming stars pinned on the chests of each of the three elders. With the three of them making a move simultaneously, a powerful might reminiscent of the relentless currents of a river burst forth.

Boom!

The two forces collided, cancelling one another out.

The eyebrows of one of the elders shot up, and a powerful air of authority exuded from him. Stepping forward, he glared at Zhang Xuan with wrathful eyes.

"This friend over here, to barge in here and severely wound one of my elders, are you belittling us, or does the Blacksmith Guild mean nothing to you?"

Upon seeing the elder, Song Zhen hurriedly sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan. "H-he is Guild Leader Zhong..."

"Guild Leader Zhong?"

"Un, Guild Leader Zhong Mingchun. He is a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert, as well as a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith. His strength is even superior to the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and it is no joke to say that he is the strongest expert of our Firesource City," Song Zhen explained anxiously.

Due to its unique geographical terrain, the Blacksmith Guild and Apothecary Guild had developed to become far more prosperous and stronger than the other occupations. As a result, the head of the Blacksmith Guild was even stronger than the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

Now that an expert of Guild Leader Zhong's caliber had gotten involved in this matter as well... how were they to resolve this issue?

Before Zhang Xuan could say a word, Sun Jin had already climbed to his feet and

exclaimed furiously, "Guild Leader Zhong, save me! He actually dared to make a move against me. This is completely preposterous; he does not care about the law at all. A person like him must be killed, and his corpse must be incinerated with the earth flames so as to serve as a warning to others."

"I am a blacksmith myself, so naturally, I have no thoughts of belittling the Blacksmith Guild!" Paying no heed to Sun Jin, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out his 6-star blacksmith emblem.

"You are a 6-star blacksmith?"

Upon seeing the emblem, Guild Leader Zhong frowned. A moment later, he spoke with a grim voice. "Even if you are a 6-star blacksmith, any grudges you have with Sun Jin should be resolved through the headquarters. If you had applied for a Life-and-Death Duel beforehand, there would have been nothing that we could have said about the situation. However, to barge into our guild and harm one of our men, there is no way you are getting out of here alive today. Set up the formation!"

Right after saying those words, Guild Leader Zhong waved his hand.

Hualala!

The two elders beside him immediately rushed into their positions, forming a unique formation around Zhang Xuan.

"I have already told you my identity. As the guild leader, instead of investigating the situation, you chose to set up a formation to deal with me instead. Don't you think that you are being a little too hasty here?"

He had already revealed his identity as a 6-star blacksmith, and yet, the other party still unhesitatingly chose to make a move against him. After all of the talk about rules and order, the other party was still siding with his own men!

"Take down that insolent fellow first before we talk about the matter!" Ignoring Zhang Xuan's words, Guild Leader Zhong bellowed furiously before raising his palm and charging forward.

Hong long!

As Guild Leader Zhong made his move, the other two elders also raised their palms.

The three surges of zhenqi formed a unique formation that shrouded the entire lounge.

Under the effects of the formation, the three of them could transmit their powers to one another freely, allowing them to practically double the strength of an individual among them in an instant. Guild Leader Zhong might only have been at Saint 1-dan pinnacle a moment ago, but with the other two elders infusing their strength into him, he had gained the power to face even a Saint 2-dan primary stage cultivator face-on.

Taking a glance at the formation, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Three Stars Violetmoon Formation?"

As a 6-star pinnacle formation master, he saw through the other party's seemingly profound formation with a single glance.

The Three Stars Violetmoon Formation had been created by a Saint realm formation master two thousand years ago. Requiring three men for it, the formation served to create a remote connection between the trio, allowing them to put their strength together and exert a might far greater than a normal collaboration among them.

For Guild Leader Zhong and the two elders to go all out and utilize such a formation right from the start, they must have felt threatened by his strength.

"If you know of the formation, you would do well to raise your hands and surrender peacefully. Perhaps, I can consider sparing you this once. Otherwise, today shall be the day of your death!"

Zhenqi rumbled in Guild Leader Zhong's palm, threatening to burst forth at any moment.

"Day of my death?" Zhang Xuan shook his head, his face reflecting the deep disappointment he had in the other party. "Despite serving as the guild leader, you are unaware of the atrocities committed by your own subordinate, allowing him to bring harm upon many budding blacksmiths. Not only so, you jump swiftly to conclusions, choosing to turn against me to protect your own subordinate without investigating the matter. It seems like it's about time to clean up the Firesource City Blacksmith Guild!"

Even if Guild Leader Zhong wasn't able to see through the anomaly in Song Zhen's cultivation technique in a glance like Zhang Xuan had, he should have at least noticed

or heard something about the huge reserve of ores that Sun Jin had amassed over the years. That should have been enough to send warning bells ringing in Guild Leader Zhong's mind to investigate the matter!

Regardless of whether Guild Leader Zhong was intentionally covering for Song Zhen or hadn't noticed it in the first place, there was one thing that was certain—he had seriously failed in his responsibilities as a guild leader, and he had to be punished for that.

"We can talk about that once you survive our attack!"

On the other hand, seeing how the other party was uttering such big words even when death was imminent for him, Guild Leader Zhong harrumphed coldly. Stepping forward, a powerful aura reminiscent of an imposing dragon burst forth from him, and a huge congregation of energy exploded out.

Boom!

That huge congregation of energy swiftly warped into a massive sword as it bolted toward Zhang Xuan with unbelievable speed.

Song Zhen's face paled in fright, and he exclaimed anxiously, "Be careful!"

The might gathered within the massive sword felt so great that it seemed as if it could even split the world in two. Not even a Saint 2-dan expert could possibly stand against such immense force.

It was for his sake that the other party had come here. If the other party were to be killed because of him, he would feel guilt-ridden for life.

Clenching his jaws in determination, Song Zhen was just about to charge forward to take the attack in Zhang Xuan's stead when the other party abruptly grabbed the teacup on the table beside him and poured its contents forward.

Weng!

The next instant, the massive sword of zhenqi abruptly swerved upward.

Boom!

The sword tore through the roof, leaving debris and dust scattering all around the lounge.

He actually deflected that attack with a single cup of tea? This... Unable to believe his eyes, Song Zhen rubbed his eyes forcefully, seemingly trying to check if he was dreaming.

The trio had brought out the might of the Three Stars Violetmoon Formation perfectly, such that even Saint 2-dan experts would have had no choice but to flee before that overwhelming strength. Yet, that fellow had actually deflected that powerful attack with just a cup of tea? Just how in the world did he manage to do it?

As much as Song Zhen was astonished, Guild Leader Zhong and the others were flabbergasted by the ludicrous sight before them as well.

To redirect the might of their formation with just a cup of tea, that was something that had exceeded the scope of their imagination. Inconceivable!

"There is something bizarre about that fellow. Let's use our strongest move!" Guild Leader Zhong roared furiously.

In the next instant, the three elders drew their swords. Three chilling gleams flashed through the air, heading right for Zhang Xuan.

This is bad.

Upon seeing Guild Leader Zhong and the other two elders drawing their swords, Song Zhen's face turned as pale as a sheet of paper. It was apparent that Guild Leader Zhong and the others were enraged, and they were planning to kill Zhang Xuan! He hurriedly turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan anxiously, only to see the latter frowning in displeasure.

"Are you done yet?"

After saying those words, he stood up and lifted the chair beneath him with a single hand before walking forward with widened strides.

A chair...? Seeing Zhang Xuan's actions, Song Zhen nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

Of your three opponents, two are wielding Spirit pinnacle swords and the last one has

a Half-Saint sword in hand. Yet... you are going to face them with just a chair? Do you think that this is a street fight?

How in the world do you expect to win with such a weapon in hand?

Chapter 1024

You Are Principal Zhang?

Not only was Song Zhen frenzied by the sight before him, the mouths of Guild Leader Zhong and the others were also twitching uncontrollably, and they felt as if their minds were about to blow at that sight.

It was indeed true that the chairs of their Blacksmith Guild were extremely expensive commodities, made out of superior materials, but even so... it was still just wood! Perhaps it might have been a decent weapon in a street fight against ordinary humans, but to use it to deal with their Three Stars Violetmoon Formation was a blatant insult to them!

Gritting his teeth tightly, Guild Leader Zhong harrumphed coldly. "Since you are courting death, don't blame us when you get hurt!"

Flicking his wrist forcefully, a sword qi reminiscent of a relentless waterfall flowed forth.

Huala!

In the blink of an eye, Guild Leader Zhong had already executed his strongest sword art.

Half-Saint battle technique... Knots of a Thousand Threads!

'As if two interweaved webs, a thousand knots there are in my heart!' 1

This battle technique was created by a lovesick swordmaster a thousand years ago. The main aim of the sword qi lay not in killing but coiling. Once struck by this technique, one would feel as if one had fallen into a marsh, unable to struggle free.

With Guild Leader Zhong's current strength, complemented by the effects of the formation, not even a Saint 2-dan intermediate stage cultivator would be able to deal with it easily. It seemed like he was aware that ordinary means wouldn't be effective on the other party, considering the other party's extraordinary strength and deep

comprehension of formations. As such, he had decided to use his strongest means in the hope of taking down the other party swiftly.

Hula!

The sword qi swiftly formed circle after circle. Once trapped within, even the most formidable of experts would have to suffer a fair bit to break free. Yet, the young man before him didn't seem to be aware of the danger ahead of him. Holding the leg of the chair, he continued proceeding forward fearlessly.

"You came!" Guild Leader Zhong sneered.

Tzzzz!

With a skillful flick of his sword, the sword qi instantaneously surrounded Zhang Xuan.

I succeeded? Guild Leader Zhong nearly leaped up in excitement.

He had only intended to use this technique to harass the other party, hoping to uncover the full extent of the other party's strength through it. Yet, who knew that he would successfully coil his sword qi around the other party so easily?

So far, he had never encountered a cultivator who could break free from his Knots of a Thousand Threads before!

Delighted, Guild Leader Zhong had just started thinking about how he should deal with the other party when the person who should have been trapped within his Knots of a Thousand Threads abruptly vanished, causing his sword qi to end up coiling around nothing. The next moment, the other party abruptly appeared right before him, and the blunt, squarish edges of the wooden chair came crashing down forcefully on his head.

"I..." Guild Leader Zhong's body stiffened. Before he could make sense of what had just happened, a sharp pain abruptly assaulted his face.

Peng peng peng peng!

Despite the weak material used to make the chair, it had been reinforced by the other party's zhenqi, making it as tough as steel. In the blink of an eye, his face was already completely soaked in blood.

"Wait a moment..." The other two 6-star blacksmiths who had been fighting alongside Guild Leader Zhong were also frenzied by the sight before them.

They had gone to the extent of utilizing a collaborative formation along with their strongest attack, and yet, they had still ended up being pummeled by the other party. More importantly... it was one thing if the other party had wielded a powerful weapon, but he was only equipped with the chair he had been sitting down on a moment ago! Just the thought of the current situation left them feeling so stifled that they could spurt blood.

It was not much of an issue that he had been pummeled by an expert, but if the other blacksmiths were to learn that their guild leader had been viciously pummeled by a person wielding with a chair, they would become the laughingstock of the entire Firesource City!

As such, the two elders hurriedly charged forward to save their guild leader. The zhenqi in their bodies surged furiously as they drew out two white streams of silk-like sword qi.

However, before their attack could land on the young man, the sight before them abruptly darkened. All of a sudden, they found a chair headed right toward their faces as well.

Pilipala!

Zhang Xuan swung his arm relentlessly, bringing the chair down upon the trio before him.

They sure were shameless.

It was out of concern for their dignity that he had held himself back, but those three were so thick-skinned that they didn't know when they would stop. What formation, strongest attack, and sword art? Shouldn't they have realized that it was futile by now?

Even a Saint 2-dan combat master wasn't a match for him; what could three Saint 1-dan fellows do? Putting aside setting up a formation, even if they were to bring their entire extended family over, they would still not have been a match for him!

After two minutes of merciless pummeling, the three most esteemed blacksmiths in the guild were eventually left lying on the ground, bruised all over.

"This..." Sun Jin was dumbfounded, unable to comprehend what had just happened.

He had thought that, with the guild leader and the two elders making a move simultaneously, they would surely have been able to subdue the other party easily. Yet, never in his dreams did he expect to see the other party easily suppressing the trio with just a chair in hand.

For a chair to actually overwhelm a Half-Saint weapon, just what was this?

"Alright!" After giving the guild leader and the two elders a harsh beating, Zhang Xuan finally placed the chair down and sat down on it once more.

"Are you willing to listen to my words now?"

"You... Who in the world are you?"

Not expecting a twenty-year-old young man to actually possess such astounding prowess, Guild Leader Zhong clenched his jaws tightly and roared, "Barging into the Blacksmith Guild and beating up the guild leader and elders, I have already reported this matter to the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion. Be prepared to face the wrath of Pavilion Master Feng!"

The Master Teacher Pavilion was in charge of maintaining the security and order of the region it was stationed in. Regardless of the identity of the young man before him, his act of barging into the Blacksmith Guild and intentionally wounding its members had already infringed upon the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

The other party would have already gotten away by the time the personnel from the Blacksmith Guild headquarters arrived to deal with this matter. However, there was still the Firesource City Master Teacher Pavilion located not too far away, and once they learned of the matter, they would surely rush over at top speed.

While many had viewed him to be the strongest expert in Firesource City, Guild Leader Zhong knew that that was far from the case. In terms of fighting prowess, there was no doubt that Pavilion Master Feng was above him. On top of that, for some reason, many experts had gathered in the regional Master Teacher Pavilion in recent days. Once they dispatch their forces, they would surely be able to apprehend that fellow and teach him a lesson that he would never forget.

"Pavilion Master Feng? You are talking about Feng Yihui?" Zhang Xuan asked with an

ironic smile on his lips.

"That's right!" Guild Leader Zhong roared affirmatively.

The head of the Firesource City Master Teacher Pavilion, Feng Yihui, was his close friend, and they had known one another for more than a hundred years now. As soon as he learned that someone had barged into the Blacksmith Guild, he had immediately sent a message to inform the other party. Judging from the amount of time that had passed, the other party was due to arrive very soon.

All he could do now was pray for Pavilion Master Feng to arrive as soon as possible so as to back him up. However, at that moment, the young man before him abruptly turned his gaze outside and said, "Pavilion Master Feng, you have been watching this commotion long enough. Isn't it about time you come in?"

"Watching this commotion? Pavilion Master Feng... has already arrived?"

'Gedeng!'

An ominous premonition struck Guild Leader Zhong's heart. He hurriedly turned his head and saw an old man walking over with an awkward look on his face.

"Zhang shi!" Upon walking into the room, the old man bowed deeply to the young man first before turning his gaze toward him. "Guild Leader Zhong..."

This old man was the head of the Firesource City Master Teacher Pavilion, Feng Yihui.

Upon receiving his old friend's call for aid, he had immediately rushed over as soon as he could, fearing that the other party might have been in danger. However, when he arrived at the doorstep, he had realized that the so-called intruder was actually Principal Zhang, and he had immediately halted his footsteps.

Principal Zhang was a 6-star master teacher like him, but as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, his standing was a tier above his, comparable to 7-star master teachers. Naturally, he didn't have the right to question the other party's actions.

As such, even when he saw Guild Leader Zhong being viciously pummeled by a chair, he had continued to hide outside, not daring to step in to intervene. However, he hadn't expected that Principal Zhang would actually notice his presence.

With his presence exposed, he had no choice but to walk out awkwardly.

"Zhang shi? He is... a master teacher?" Noticing how respectful Pavilion Master Feng was when he greeted the other party, Guild Leader Zhong's heart skipped a beat. He hurriedly turned his gaze toward the young man.

Didn't the other party say that he was a 6-star blacksmith? Why did he become a master teacher all of a sudden? On top of that, for Pavilion Master Feng to treat the other party with such respect... Zhang shi...

"C-c-could you be... the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan?" Guild Leader Zhong's eyes widened in astonishment as realization struck him.

He had no idea whether Principal Zhang was at Firesource City or not, but he was aware that there were twenty thousand students from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy who were in the midst of a mission there at the moment.

Of the twenty thousand students, ten thousand of them had blacksmith as their main supporting occupation, and they had just requested a substantial sum of smithing resources from them just two days ago, so naturally, he was aware of the matter.

Considering that there were twenty thousand students there, it wouldn't be a surprise if the principal was here as well!

"Indeed, I am Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Principal Zhang? Song Zhen's body stiffened in disbelief when he heard those words, and soon after, his eyes turned fiery with agitation.

It hadn't been long since Principal Zhang had been inaugurated as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but his name was already well-known throughout the entire Hongyuan Empire. Even the citizens of a place as remote as Firesource City had all heard of his name.

For such a legendary figure to say that it was possible for him to become a blacksmith... Perhaps, there just might be hope for him!

Forming a stark contrast to Song Zhen's excitement was Sun Jin's look of horror. His eyes narrowed in disbelief as a feeling of weakness assaulted his entire body.

If the other party had only been a blacksmith, he might just have been able to deny it to the very end. But if the other party was a master teacher... it was doubtful that his strategy would be able to work!

The discerning eyes of the master teachers were not something that could be fathomed through common sense, and the Master Teacher Pavilion possessed incredible means that would make it nigh impossible for anyone to lie to them!

Not to mention, Zhang Xuan was the cream of the crop among the master teachers, a true legend!

Guild Leader Zhong's face had paled with fright, but after all that had happened, he was reluctant to give up. "Even if you are... the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, surely it is against the rules for you to barge into the Blacksmith Guild and assault our men..."

Even if the other party had a standing higher than his, to barge into their base and wound so many of their men, surely the Master Teacher Pavilion wouldn't condone such actions!

"Rules?" Harrumphing coldly, Zhang Xuan rose from his seat. Commanding the authority and disposition of a principal, he said, "Only those who abide by the rules deserve to be protected by the rules!"

"Only those who abide by the rules deserve to be protected by the rules?" Guild Leader Zhong was baffled by Zhang Xuan's words. "When has our Blacksmith Guild broken the rules?"

"Song Zhen, come over!" Zhang Xuan turned to the middle-aged man by the side and beckoned him over.

"Yes!" Nodding, Song Zhen hurried forward.

"Exert your zhenqi," Zhang Xuan instructed.

Song Zhen nodded before driving his zhenqi. The next moment, a heavy aura permeated the entire room.

"Th-this type of zhenqi..." Guild Leader Zhong's eyes widened in bewilderment before they abruptly narrowed in realization.

As a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, he could tell with a single glance what attribute the other party's zhenqi was and whether it complemented the earth flames or not.

It was apparent that, with the middle-aged man's zhenqi, it was impossible for him to become a blacksmith.

Seeing that Guild Leader Zhong understood what he was getting at, Zhang Xuan turned to Song Zhen and urged him on. "Tell your story to Guild Leader Zhong over here!"

"Yes." Song Zhen nodded. "I was one of Blacksmith Sun Jin's apprentices, and I have been learning smithing ever since I was seven. The cultivation technique that I am practicing has been taught by him..."

Without hiding anything, he repeated everything that he had told Zhang Xuan previously to Guild Leader Zhong.

Even though he still wasn't too sure what was going on, he knew that Principal Zhang was doing all of it for him, and he trusted the other party as well.

"He imparted such a cultivation technique to you, and yet, he still urged you to take the blacksmith examination? How is this possible? Unless..."

Right after hearing Song Zhen's words, Guild Leader Zhong face turned completely pale. With a face as cold as the biting frost of a winter night, he turned to look at Sun Jin.

Chapter 1025

Master Teachers Aren't to Be Deceived!

As a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, if Guild Leader Zhong still couldn't understand what was happening after hearing so much, he might as well just end his life then and there.

However, while doubts had sprouted his heart, he still couldn't really believe that Sun Jin would commit such atrocities.

Sun Jin was the elder he favored the most, and he had even intended to pass down his position as the guild leader to him. Why would the other party commit such foolishness?

However, the truth was already laid clearly before him, and he had no choice but to face it. There was no way the principal of a Master Teacher Academy would barge into the Blacksmith Guild and cause such an uproar without investigating the matter properly.

"What is going on here?" Gritting his teeth coldly, Guild Leader Zhong questioned the fellow in front of him. He really wanted to skin the other party alive at this moment.

If this matter was indeed true, not only would Sun Jin be disgraced, the headquarters would also make an example out of the Firesource City Blacksmith Guild to warn other blacksmiths from engaging in such immoral actions. As the guild leader, he would have to bear the criticisms from the public for his neglect of responsibility, perhaps even going down in historical records for his incompetence!

"I..." Sun Jin's lips twitched uncontrollably as he tried to explain. "Guild leader, I didn't do it! I really don't know what is going on!"

"You don't know what is going on?" A sharp glint flashed across Guild Leader Zhong's eyes. "You should know full well the consequences of lying to a master teacher. Come clean now, and I might still be able to plead on your behalf. Otherwise, once your sins surface, I won't be able to say a word even if Principal Zhang has you executed at this very moment!"

Master teachers weren't to be deceived!

If one were found lying to a master teacher in the midst of an investigation, their sins would engender far graver consequences. Not only would the person in question be executed on the spot, even their kin and students might be implicated, possibly being barred from joining any Upper Nine Paths occupations for their entire lives!

This wasn't the rule set by the Master Teacher Pavilion but a joint agreement made by the various occupations. This was something they had decided upon out of respect for the Master Teacher Pavilion due to their contributions to the world.

If one would deceive even the teachers, they had already lost their principles. A person who lived by no principles would only eventually become a disaster for society!

"I..."

Sun Jin's face paled, and his body began trembling non-stop.

It went without saying that he was aware of such a rule as well, but there was a spark of hope in the depths of his heart. Perhaps, if he could drag things out and the other party was unable to find any concrete evidence of his wrongdoings, he might just be acquitted of his sins.

"Is there nothing that you want to say?" Guild Leader Zhong bellowed as the disappointment in his eyes deepened.

From the moment that Sun Jin hesitated, the truth was already apparent to him. If Sun Jin had really done nothing of the sort, he would surely have fought hard for his innocence. There wouldn't have been a look of dilemma on his face.

A slight gesture, but it spoke a thousand words.

Having come to the same conclusion as well, Pavilion Master Feng Yihui harrumphed coldly by the side. "Don't harbor hopes that the Master Teacher Pavilion will let this matter pass just by dragging things out. Do you honestly think that the Master Teacher Pavilion would be so incompetent as to be unable to uncover the truth of a matter as simple as this?"

He felt that this matter was a failure on his part as well. Such an atrocity had been committed in his area of jurisdiction, and yet, he was actually ignorant of it. In the end,

it even required Principal Zhang, who had barely arrived a day ago, to point the matter out and resolve it.

Having his thoughts being voiced, Sun Jin's body froze in horror. His lips pursed tightly together in fear.

Indeed, as long as the Master Teacher Pavilion put its mind into it, there was nothing that it couldn't uncover.

Many years might have passed after what he had done, but the family members of the thirty apprentices he had taken in back then were still around. He was only able to get away with it thus far due to the lack of attention on the humble apprentices in the Blacksmith Guild. However, if a thorough investigation were to be conducted, the Master Teacher Pavilion would surely be able to find evidence of his wrongdoing.

An apprentice failing the blacksmith examination for many years might be attributed to his lack of talent, but for it to happen to thirty apprentices... even a fool could tell that something was wrong with it.

Moreover...

Gathering his zhenqi in his left hand, he discreetly reached out for the storage ring on his right hand, intending to forcefully destroy it. However, before he could succeed, a powerful surge of sword qi flashed across his eyes.

Huala!

The right hand's middle finger was severed from the major knuckle, and the storage ring fell to the ground as well.

"If I am not mistaken, the cultivation technique that he had imparted to Song Zhen is in here!" Zhang Xuan said coldly.

"I'll check it right now!" Guild Leader Zhong walked forward and picked up the storage ring on the ground.

With a surge of zhenqi, he erased the Soul Imprint on the storage ring before immersing his consciousness into it. A moment later, a book suddenly materialized in his hand.

Flipping it open, his face gradually grew darker and darker, to the point that it seemed as if he might just explode on the spot. With gritted teeth, he passed it over to Song Zhen by the side.

"Is this the cultivation technique that you practice?"

Song Zhen took the book and browsed through it. A few moments later, he nodded. "That's right. This is the cultivation technique that he imparted to us back then!"

Holding the book tightly in his grasp, Guild Leader Zhong turned his gaze back upon Sun Jin. "Is there anything else that you have to say for yourself?"

"I..." Knowing that he was done for, Sun Jin's knees fell onto the ground in despair.

It might have been possible for him to argue his way out of this a moment ago, but with that cultivation technique manual coming to the surface, there was no way he could do so anymore! That was irrefutable evidence of his wrongdoing!

"Greed blinded my eyes. I thought that if I could find a way to procure the valuable ores lying all around Firesource City, I would be able to accrue a huge fortune for myself. Even if I were to retire in the future, I will be able to enjoy a life of luxury."

"For your life of luxury, you cast aside your morals and harmed so many innocent young children. How dare you call yourself a blacksmith? How dare you call yourself a teacher?" Guild Leader Zhong roared vehemently.

While blacksmiths weren't master teachers, they had their own heritage that they passed down from generation to generation as well. As such, teaching was something they viewed with solemnity and sanctity as well. Yet, the fellow before him had actually used nurturing the next generation as an excuse to commit grievous atrocities. This was going beyond the ethical bottom line of all blacksmiths!

With a tap of his finger, Guild Leader Zhong sealed Sun Jin's cultivation before turning to Zhang Xuan and Feng Yihui, saying, "Principal Zhang, Pavilion Master Feng, it is me putting my trust in the wrong person and failing to keep my subordinate in check that allowed for atrocities. I shall resign from my position as the leader of the Blacksmith Guild and spend the rest of my life compensating the families of the thirty deceased apprentices."

As the leader of the Blacksmith Guild, it was a huge breach of responsibility of his that

Sun Jin had been able to act as he pleased for more than two whole decades, harming not only Song Zhen but many more apprentices as well. Even though those apprentices had long passed away, they were bound to have kin and friends still living. To make up for his failure, he had decided to dedicate his entire life to making up for this mistake.

"You aren't the perpetrator, but you do have a heavy responsibility to play in this matter!" Zhang Xuan said with his hands behind his back.

While the crime had not been committed by Guild Leader Zhong, it was a fact that he was the one who had failed to notice Sun Jin's misdeeds and granted him the authority of an elder. The greater power that Sun Jin wielded had made it even more difficult for anyone to stand up against him, thus emboldening him to harm even more people. For one, there was no way Sun Jin could have been able to hide the deaths of so many of his apprentices if not for the power granted to him.

In this sense, Guild Leader Zhong wasn't free from blame either.

"I understand. It is a pity that there is nothing I can really do to make it up to them."

After saying those words, Guild Leader Zhong shot a glance at Song Zhen and sighed wearily.

Putting aside the deceased apprentices, even for the middle-aged man before him, there was nothing he could do that could salvage the damage done to him.

The cultivation technique that the other party practiced was fundamentally at odds with the earth flames. Even as a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, there was nothing he could do that could change that.

"That might not necessarily be so..." Noting Guild Leader Zhong's gestures, Zhang Xuan could somewhat fathom a guess on what the other party was thinking about. Walking up to Song Zhen, he stretched out his hand and said, "Pass the book to me for a moment."

"Yes." Nodding, Song Zhen respectfully passed the cultivation technique manual that had just been procured from Sun Jin's storage ring to Zhang Xuan.

Taking the book, Zhang Xuan casually flipped through it before lowering his head contemplatively.

A moment later, he took out a book and a brush and began writing swiftly. A few moments later, he had already written out a brand-new cultivation technique. He passed it over to Song Zhen and said, "Cultivate according to the method written here."

By this point, Song Zhen had already made sense of everything that had just happened. The gaze that he directed toward Sun Jin was devoid of the respect it had before, replaced with endless hostility.

It was with a heart filled with hope that he had become the other party's apprentice. For more than twenty years, it was the hope that he harbored that drove him on, allowing him to persevere through even the toughest of times. However, the more hope one harbored, the greater the despair upon failure.

When Song Zhen took the book from Zhang Xuan's hands, his mind was completely blank.

He was very grateful toward Principal Zhang for bringing him justice, but having the goal that he had spent his entire life striving for being deemed impossible all of a sudden had left him completely lost. He had no idea what he should do from there onward.

"I have said that I will make you a blacksmith. I never renege on my promises." Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "Once you are done cultivating the cultivation technique I have written down, you will be ready to take the 5-star or even the 6-star blacksmith examination!"

"5-star? 6-star?" Song Zhen was flabbergasted by what he was hearing. He dared not believe what Zhang Xuan had said to be true.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded with a smile.

Song Zhen hurriedly flipped open the book in his hand. The faint aroma from the slightly damp ink and the elegant calligraphy, which seemed as if they would leap out from the pages at any moment, calmed his unsettled mind.

It didn't take him too long to finish reading through the entire book. By the time he was done, his body had already gone completely still, unable to believe what he had just seen.

The fact that he had attained the incredible strength of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan

in his thirties without the guidance of a master teacher was testimony to the incredible talent he possessed in cultivation. Even though he had only swiftly browsed through the manual once, he could already imagine the frightening might one could potentially harness after mastering it.

Not only would it resolve the conflict between the attribute of his zhenqi and the earth flames, it would even bring his cultivation to greater heights!

Seeing the daze Song Zhen was in, Zhang Xuan urged him on with a smile. "You should start cultivating now!"

"Yes!" Without any hesitation, Song Zhen hurriedly sat onto the floor and began cultivating according to the method recorded on the book.

After Song Zhen began cultivating, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward Guild Leader Zhong and said, "I will need to trouble you to find three grade-6 pills for me. They are namely the Bone Reinforcing Body Tempering Pill, Great Reversal Meridian Reconstruction Pill..."

As Song Zhen had practiced the cultivation technique from Sun Jin for more than twenty years now, it was no easy feat to alter his meridians and change the attribute of his zhenqi. Just the cultivation technique that Zhang Xuan had tailored for him wouldn't suffice to make him a blacksmith.

It was necessary to complement the cultivation technique with some pills as well.

Reconstructing the meridians to change the attribute of a zhenqi that was at odds with the earth flames previously to complement it instead was a feat that would have been impossible for anyone else to pull off. Only he, who cultivated the perfect Heaven's Path Divine Art, was capable of calculating a method that could resolve the issue.

"These pills might have been difficult to find anywhere else, but they aren't too uncommon in Firesource City. I will get it done right now!" Guild Leader Zhong said before rushing off.

A city built on a land rich in earth flames, blacksmiths and apothecaries there possessed an inherent advantage given the nature of their craft, thus making them the most popular occupations in Firesource City. Furthermore, there were many precious medicinal herbs in the area.

So, pills that would have been difficult to find anywhere else could easily be found within this city.

It didn't take too long for Guild Leader Zhong to return with the three pills Zhang Xuan spoke of.

Zhang Xuan passed the three pills to Song Zhen and gave him specific instructions on when he should consume them while cultivating.

An hour later, a resounding buzz suddenly sounded from Song Zhen's body, and his aura abruptly surged. Within this short period of time, not only did he manage to change the attribute of his zhenqi, he had even succeeded in achieving a breakthrough to Half-Saint!

Chapter 1026

Reforging the Golden Origin Cauldron

"Miracle! It is indeed a miracle!" Guild Leader Zhong muttered with a face dazed with astonishment.

With just a cultivation technique and three pills, a person had actually managed to change the attribute of his zhenqi and achieve a breakthrough while he was at it. This was already a feat that could be considered a miracle!

Despite witnessing the entire process with his own eyes, he still couldn't help but feel as if he had been dreaming. The matter was just too inconceivable for him.

"This is the prowess... of Principal Zhang?" Pavilion Master Feng was also shocked beyond words.

As a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, he possessed an eye of discernment far superior to those of his peers. Naturally, he could also tell how valuable the cultivation technique that had been imparted to Song Zhen was.

To create such a formidable cultivation technique within moments and give it away unreservedly to another... This was how a true master teacher should act! Here was a role model that all master teachers should strive to be like!

It was no wonder he could become the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy at such a young age and win the respect and admiration of all elders and students. Indeed, there was no mediocre man beneath a true legend.

"Thank you, Teacher!"

Song Zhen completed his cultivation while the duo was still overwhelmed with shock, and he hurriedly rushed up to Zhang Xuan and knelt before him respectfully.

At this moment, he was filled with nothing but gratitude and admiration for the young man before him, such that he would even end his life without any hesitation at a word from the other party.

"I am not your teacher, so there is no need for you to be so courteous around me." Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"You have taught me such a valuable cultivation technique and given me the strength to continue living on. You are the only teacher I will acknowledge in my life, and this won't change until death!" Kneeling on the ground, Song Zhen kowtowed several times with unshakable resolve in his eyes.

Without the other party, he would have been nothing more than a cold corpse lying in an alley. His family would still have been mocked by others for his incompetence. Sun Jin would still have been the high and mighty elder he was, and the atrocities he had committed would eventually have been buried amid the dust of history. Perhaps, countless other apprentices who had harbored hopes as great as his would have ended up walking in the same footsteps as him as well.

Principal Zhang hadn't just taught him a cultivation technique; he had changed his life. Even if the other party was unwilling to take him in as his student, he would still view the other party as his teacher, and this wouldn't change until death.

Seeing the determination in the Song Zhen's eyes, Zhang Xuan eventually nodded in agreement. "Very well then. I can't take you in as my direct disciple, but since the workings of fate have brought us together, I shall take you in as my blacksmith student."

To accept a direct disciple was a heavy commitment. Song Zhen might have been extremely talented, but Zhang Xuan valued character far more than anything else. Given how short a time he had spent with the other party, it was still too early for something like that. Nevertheless, it was fine for him to take the other party in as his blacksmith student.

After all, the responsibility of a master teacher was to spread their knowledge across the world, so it wasn't rare for master teachers to have innumerable students. In a sense, this was similar to his relationship with the members of the Xuanxuan Faction as well. Thus, it wasn't anything much for Zhang Xuan to take Song Zhen in as his student

Hearing those words, Song Zhen hurriedly kowtowed earnestly in agitation. "Thank you, Teacher!"

Seeing such a sight, looks of envy surfaced on the faces of the blacksmiths gathered around the area, and this was no exception even for the elders and Guild Leader Zhong as well.

It was apparent that Principal Zhang possessed an unfathomable understanding of smithing. One who was able to become his student, even if just in name, would surely have a boundless future ahead of them.

Ignoring the looks from the crowd, Zhang Xuan said with a smile, "As your blacksmith teacher, it would be unbecoming of me if I didn't do something for you."

Flicking his wrist, a massive cauldron fell to the ground, raising a cloud of dust. "This is the Guardian Saint Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, a Saint low-tier artifact, the Golden Origin Cauldron! I intended to reforge it once more... but since you are my student, I will be leaving this job to you. This experience should do you much good in your future endeavors as a blacksmith, and even becoming a 7-star blacksmith shouldn't be a problem to you in the future!"

"You want me to reforge a Saint low-tier artifact? T-t-this... But I am only an apprentice! I have never successfully smithed a Mortal-tier weapon before; I can't possibly take on such a heavy responsibility." Song Zhen was scared out of his wits.

The other blacksmiths in the room, including Guild Leader Zhong, also nearly fainted from the sheer ridiculousness of what they were witnessing.

A Saint-tier artifact was something that only 7-star blacksmiths were qualified to come into contact with. Being able to work with one would indeed allow one to make huge progress as a blacksmith, be it in terms of skill or state of mind.

This was especially so for 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths. This experience might very well have opened a brand-new window for them into smithing, thus becoming the impetus for them to make a breakthrough.

But... to allow an apprentice who hadn't even succeeded in smithing a Mortal-tier weapon before to work with it... Was the other party really not afraid of breaking the Saint Guardian Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

"Master, you can't be serious..." Not only were the crowd acting in such a manner, even the Golden Origin Cauldron itself was on the brink of tears. "Actually... I think that my current cultivation is wonderful as it is; there is no need for me to make another

breakthrough."

It did want to make a breakthrough, but only if it was done through its master's hands would it be able to rest assured.

To allow a fellow who has never successfully smithed a weapon in his life to work on it instead... What the heck is that?

Did I do something that so greatly offended you recently that you had to find such a reason to do me in?

"Enough! What is with this nonsense that you are spouting?" Paying no heed to the horrified Golden Origin Cauldron, Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

Even though his current mastery as a blacksmith was indeed at 6-star pinnacle, the reforging of the Golden Origin Cauldron didn't just involve refining and quenching. More importantly, the Violetgilt Metal would have to be smithed into the Golden Origin Cauldron, a task that involved forging.

And that happened to be something that he wasn't good at.

If he were to really attempt to reforge the Golden Origin Cauldron before so many formidable blacksmiths, not only would it be embarrassing for him, the Golden Origin Cauldron could very well be hammered out of shape in his hands, possibly becoming an unseemly slab of metal!

While Song Zhen was only an apprentice, Zhang Xuan could tell through how the other party forged his sword earlier that he had all of the basics down. Perhaps it was due to his inability to handle flames, Song Zhen seemed to have focused all of his efforts in refining his forging skills, granting him a forging mastery that was on par or even superior to most 6-star blacksmiths. Without a doubt, the other party was the ideal candidate to smith the Violetgilt Metal into the Golden Origin Cauldron!

With this success, Song Zhen would be able to gain a deep insight into smithing. It would only be a matter of time before he became a 6-star blacksmith or even beyond that.

Through this, not only would Zhang Xuan be able to avoid any embarrassment due to his inability to forge weapons, he would also be able to portray himself as an unfathomable expert, thus deepening the respect others had for him. More

importantly, he could temper this newly-accepted student of his while he was at it.

In a sense, it was like killing three birds with one stone, so why not?

"Yes..." Seeing that his teacher had gotten angry at his hesitance, Song Zhen dared not say any more. Nodding, he plucked up his courage and walked over, facing the Golden Origin Cauldron with an ashen face.

On the other hand, the Golden Origin Cauldron was shaking uncontrollably, devoid of the haughtiness and arrogance it usually commanded when it crushed Saint realm experts. Its three thick legs were trembling so much that it seemed as if they would cave in at any moment.

Seeing the states that the man and cauldron were in, Zhang Xuan shook his head. Without wasting any time, he began issuing instructions. "The reforging of the Golden Origin Cauldron is an extremely important task. I will be issuing you instructions, so make sure to follow them carefully. There is no room for mistakes here!"

"Yes!" Hearing that Zhang Xuan would be guiding him along, Song Zhen heaved a sigh of relief.

"Take out the Violetgilt Metal I had you bring along earlier, you will need it in the forging process..."

After the preparations were done, Zhang Xuan began issuing more detailed instructions to Song Zhen. "First, place the Violetgilt Ore into the cauldron and drive the earth flames with your zhenqi for thirteen breaths so as to melt it. Thirteen breaths later, place the Golden Origin Cauldron inside and begin fusing the two together. Twenty-seven breaths later, take the resulting alloy out and use the Thousand Metal Forging Technique to hammer the Golden Origin Cauldron 184 times, not one more, not one less. Make sure to hammer it all over, and every strike must consist of only 80% of your full strength..."

Instead of using zhenqi telepathy, Zhang Xuan said the instructions out loud. Hearing the instructions, the blacksmiths in the area glanced at one another with shocked faces.

They had thought that the instructions that Zhang Xuan would be issuing Song Zhen would be simple, basic ones. However, after hearing those words, they realized that they had been utterly wrong. Never in the world had they seen such precise smithing

before!

How in the world could the other party issue such detailed instructions? That would require a thorough understanding of the Golden Origin Cauldron, Violetgilt Metal, and even the properties of the earth flames! Not just that, the other party had to know Song Zhen's capability and strength inside out!

This wasn't something that could be achieved with just outstanding eye of discernment alone. The sheer number of calculations required in doing so were bound to be at a fearsome level as well!

"Yes!" Hearing those words, Song Zhen suddenly had a feeling that his teacher might have calculated the entire smithing process from the start to the end, and he couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief. Swiftly memorizing what was being said, he grabbed the Violetgilt Metal ore by the side and tossed it into the cauldron.

In the Blacksmith Guild, there was no nearly no room that didn't have a formation that was connected straight to the earth flames beneath the ground. Driving his newfound strength as a Half-Saint, flames surged from the ground, and before long, the Violetgilt Metal had melted. Following which, Song Zhen placed the Golden Origin Cauldron inside...

All kinds of procedures were carried out strictly to Zhang Xuan's demands, without the slightest deviation.

"Not bad!" Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

As he had expected, the other party's mastery in forging had indeed reached the level of a true master. Even most 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths would struggle to match him.

His twenty-four years of hard work hadn't been futile. It was only due to his unyielding perseverance even in the face of failure that he had managed to achieve such a level of skill.

An hour later, a resounding chime reverberated from the Golden Origin Cauldron's body, and its Saint low-tier prowess began rising steadily. At that moment, an overwhelming aura burst into the surroundings, forcing the surrounding spectators to retreat continuously.

Hu!

A few moments later, the aura was reined back in. The Golden Origin Cauldron carried a lofty air around it and a brilliant glow.

"Saint intermediate-tier artifact? Good job!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

With just a look, he knew that he had made the right call.

The current Golden Origin Cauldron had managed to fuse perfectly with the Violetgilt Metal, reaching the level of a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, granting it strength on par with Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts!

If he were to meet the Goldenleaf King and the others once more, he would easily be able to subdue them with just a devastating crush from his cauldron! With this, the days when he would have to go through so much effort talking others into drinking his wine were finally over!

"I am still alive? Not only am I still alive, my cultivation has risen as well? Wonderful!" While Zhang Xuan was feeling glad, the Golden Origin Cauldron began pouncing about excitedly.

With a mere apprentice blacksmith working on it, it had thought that certain doom was awaiting it. Who could have known that, not only would the smithing be successful, its cultivation would even rise by a greater extent than it had initially envisioned? At this moment, it was so happy that it could hug Song Zhen and give him a good kiss.

"Teacher..." At the same time, Song Zhen also hadn't expected that he would succeed. An agitated glint rippled in his eyes, revealing the immense joy and delight he felt from his success.

While a huge reason for his success was due to his teacher guiding him along step by step, this experience had still given him a deep insight into smithing. As long as he could raise his cultivation to the required level, the 7-star blacksmith examination wasn't beyond reach!

It could be said that... this single experience had built his foundations in smithing. As long as he continued working hard, his future accomplishments would be boundless!

In order to give him such an experience, his teacher had unhesitatingly entrusted the Saint Guardian Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to him. To have such

deep trust in him... this favor was something that he would never be able to repay in his lifetime!

"Alright. As long as you internalize this experience, you should be able to advance to great heights as a blacksmith in the future."

With a grab, Zhang Xuan returned the Golden Origin Cauldron to his storage ring before waving his hand. "Pavilion Master Feng, I will be taking my leave first. I will be counting on you to take care of the other matters here!"

After saying those words, he turned around and walked away. Before long, he had already disappeared from view.

Departing with a fling of the sleeves after the job is done, asking for no compensation in return for his efforts... This is a true master teacher!

Seeing how Zhang Xuan departed without the slightest hesitation, such thoughts emerged within the minds of the remaining crowd.

Chapter 1027

I Went Easy On You Just Now!

Right after leaving the Blacksmith Guild, Zhang Xuan smiled softly.

He had only intended to prevent an innocent life from being lost, but who knew that he would end up managing to fulfil his promise to the Golden Origin Cauldron while he was at it, rising its cultivation significantly? On top of that, he had even found himself a talented blacksmith student.

It could be said that the trouble he had gone through was well worth the rewards.

As for how Sun Jin would be dealt with, that had nothing to do with him.

Nevertheless, there was no doubt that Sun Jin would have to pay a heavy price for the sins that he had committed. The death penalty would likely be on the table.

As much as Zhang Xuan hated to kill, he felt that there was no need to show mercy to those who trampled on their own students in the hope of elevating themselves.

Back when Zhang Xuan first arrived in the world, he had nary a care in the world. As long as a matter was none of his business, he would view it with perfect nonchalance, never involving himself in anything that would spell trouble. However, after everything he had gone through, he had already become a true master teacher at heart. He had begun to understand the heavy responsibilities that he bore, and he intended to live up to them as well.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled what had happened earlier in the night.

Right, I wonder if Luo shi is angry at me. I should rush back to take a look.

He slapped his forehead in distress before hurriedly rushing toward Luo Ruoxin's residence.

It had not been easy for him to close the distance between the both of them, and he didn't wish for them to return to square one due to this matter.

He should have held himself back the previous night! Why had he been so brazen as to hold the other party's hand? Hopefully, the other party wouldn't blame him for this matter.

With a conflicted mind, Zhang Xuan hurried his footsteps, and before long, Luo Ruoxin's residence was within sights.

Before he could arrive at the entrance, he saw a young man walking straight toward him.

It was the battle fanatic Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall who had challenged him earlier in the day, Feng Xun!

Caught up over the Combat Master Hall's loss to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the other party had been trying to challenge him for a while now, and that had left him deeply troubled.

As such, upon seeing Feng Xun walk over, Zhang Xuan immediately tried to find a place where he could hide. However, before he could do so, the other party had already caught sight of him and immediately rushed up, his eyes blazing with fighting will.

"Principal Zhang, do you dare have a match with me? I will suppress my cultivation to that of your level!" Feng Xun challenged with a loud voice.

"I..." Zhang Xuan was conflicted.

He had intended to quickly find Luo Ruoxin to apologize to her, but judging from how Feng Xun was acting, it was apparent that the other party wasn't going to allow him to pass if he rejected the duel.

Out of consideration for his standing, the other party had not forced the matter the previous time. However, for some reason, the other party was extremely insistent on having their duel this time round.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan relented. Waving his hand, he said, "Very well. If you suppress your cultivation, I will have a duel with you. However, it will just be a friendly spar."

Considering how determined the other party was, he knew that it was only a matter of time before this duel would be held.

"Good!" Receiving the other party's agreement, Feng Xun's eyes lit up. He swiftly suppressed his cultivation from Saint 3-dan pinnacle to Nascent Saint pinnacle.

Hong long!

Amidst a powerful gust of wind, he charged right toward Zhang Xuan.

...

Rewinding back to the moment when Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin separated...

With a face tinged with redness, the young lady hurriedly returned to her residence.

She had lived by herself from a very young age, and never once had she really come into contact with a man before. As such, when she was touched by the other party, she flew into a fluster.

After walking a distance away, she turned around to take a look, only to find that Zhang Xuan had not followed her. A frown of displeasure emerged on her face.

This was her first time meeting someone that dense!

She was embarrassed by the touch, not angry! Those who had the slightest bit of emotional intelligence would know that this was the moment to rush up to apologize. This was the perfect opportunity for the other party to get closer to her, and she could also use the chance to resolve the awkwardness from before. Yet, that fellow... had actually disappeared from sight?

That pig-headed fool!

It was only a ten-minute walk from the tavern where they had eaten earlier, and yet, despite waiting for two whole hours, the other party was still nowhere to be seen. Rage dyed her face a shade of pink.

Giving up on waiting for the fellow, Luo Ruoxin returned to her residence, only to see Mu shi waiting outside for her.

"Luo shi!"

"Un. What is the matter?" Luo Ruoxin frowned.

Mu shi hesitated for a brief moment before speaking. "It's like this. I have just received news that there could very well be Otherworldly Demon Kings in the ancient domain, so... Luo shi, won't you consider backing out of the expedition team?"

"Are you trying to order me?" Luo Ruoxin asked with a cold face.

"I-I dare not!" Mu shi was horrified.

"That had better be true!" Luo Ruoxin waved her hands coldly as she walked past Mu shi to open the doors to her residence. However, flurried footsteps sounded at that moment, and turning around, she saw a young man heading toward her.

It was Feng Xun from the Combat Master Hall.

From the moment he first met Luo Ruoxin, he had been already spellbound by her beauty. He had been trying to find a way to get close to her, but the other party had never granted him such an opportunity.

However, with the ancient domain opening tomorrow and knowing that he could very well lose his life within, he eventually built up his courage and rushed over.

Seeing the young lady's silhouette, Feng Xun yelled, "Luo shi..."

Luo Ruoxin had disguised herself, and Feng Xun didn't wield the power to see through it either. Nevertheless, she was still an outstanding beauty even with her disguise on, possessing grace that was on par with Hu Yaoyao and the others. It was no wonder Feng Xun found himself mesmerized by her.

"I have something that I wish to say to you!" Feng Xun exclaimed.

Luo Ruoxin turned around and said, "Say your piece."

"Right here?" Feng Xun glanced at Mu shi and his surroundings awkwardly, unsure of what he should do.

On the other hand, seeing that Feng Xun wasn't saying a word, Luo Ruoxin couldn't be bothered either. Turning around, she opened the door and stepped into her residence.

"W-wait a moment! I will speak! I will speak!" Knowing that he might not have another opportunity, Feng Xun gritted his teeth and stepped forward. "From the moment I

caught sight of you, I was already enchanted by your charm. Luo shi, won't you walk down the long path of cultivation alongside me?"

Feng Xun had a straightforward personality, and he didn't like to hide anything inside of him. Thus, his words were very direct as well.

"Send our guest off!"

Luo Ruoxin had been wondering what important matters the other party was going to speak of when she heard those words. She waved her hand before turning around to return to her residence.

"Luo shi, I haven't finished my piece yet..." Not expecting the other party to leave without giving him a proper reply, Feng Xun hurriedly rushed up. However, before he could follow the other party into the residence, Mu shi had already blocked his way.

"Combat Master Feng, please return for now!"

"I..." Feng Xun panicked.

Noting that Feng Xun was unwilling to give up, Mu shi frowned in displeasure. "Luo shi has already made her stand very clear by turning you away at the door."

Those words were like a pail of cold water, extinguishing the flames in Feng Xun's heart.

Indeed. He had already made things very clear, but the other party was still unwilling to allow him to enter. This was already a direct response to his confession. He would only be embarrassing himself further by pestering the other party.

"Pardon my disturbance..." Understanding this much, Feng Xun trudged away with a disconsolate look on his face. However, before he could get far, he saw Zhang Xuan rushing over in his direction.

That fellow seems to be rather close with Luo shi... Could she have rejected me because of him? Such an idea suddenly popped into Feng Xun's head, and it swiftly grew and consumed his mind. Unable to hold himself back anymore, he rushed over to block Zhang Xuan's path, thus resulting in the current situation.

...

Naturally, Zhang Xuan was unaware that the reason the other party was confronting him. Seeing the other party suppressing his cultivation to his level, he couldn't help but feel slightly embarrassed.

To be facing the other party with his cultivation suppressed to the same level as him... Wasn't that as good as bullying the other party?

But in any case, that fellow was the one who had proposed it. After a short internal struggle, Zhang Xuan felt that he should be magnanimous and go along with the other party's demand instead.

"I will bring you down!" Roaring coldly, Feng Xun raised his fist and rushed forward.

He had already heard from Liao Xun and the others that the young man before him possessed an unfathomable level of mastery in battle techniques. Thus, he decided to exploit his greatest expertise right from the start—speed!

Of the martial arts in the world, none were infallible... except for speed!

Speed happened to be what he specialized in, and as long as he made full use of it, given his superior combat instincts, he didn't believe that he wouldn't be able to defeat the other party!

Hu!

Carrying immense pressure that threatened to burst even the air, his fist arrived before Zhang Xuan in the blink of an eye.

He had thought that his amazing speed would leave the other party flustered, but to his shock, the other party... was stretching his back lazily!

In the crucial moment of a battle, instead of dodging or retaliating, you are choosing to stretch your back lazily instead? What do you mean by that?

Despite being bewildered by the nonsensical action before him, Feng Xun's fist didn't have the slightest intention of halting at all. However, before his fist could arrive at its target, the other party suddenly stopped stretching his back, and a palm abruptly flew toward him, as if striking down a pesky fly!

Padah!

He was sent tumbling into the distance. Under the immense might of the slap, his face immediately bruised red.

Truthfully, in the moment he had seen the slap, he had already begun carrying out evasive maneuvers. Yet, no matter what he did, he simply couldn't get himself out of the trajectory of the slap, as if there was some compelling power that drew the other party's palm to his face.

"Damn it!" For a combat master like him to be struck flying with but a slap, it wasn't too hard to imagine the immense frustration he must have felt. He immediately got back to his feet, intending to charge over to return the favor, but at that moment, the other party waved his hand in exasperation and said, "Why don't we just let this matter go? There is really no need for us to fight..."

"How can we end this duel without determining the victor?" In Feng Xun's eyes, it seemed like Zhang Xuan was trying to 'have mercy' on him, and that left him even more enraged. With a furious roar, he charged forward once more.

The next moment, his neck was caught by the other party's left palm, and a right palm struck his face relentlessly.

The next, next moment, Feng Xun was lying on the ground, and the other party was sitting on his back. Both fists of the other party rained down on him, as if a cotton farmer scutching 1 a bed of cotton.

The next, next, next moment, the talented combat master was lying on the ground, clutching his head tightly to his body. The other party was standing before him, kicking him mercilessly.

...

"Let's just end it here. I think this should be sufficient to consider it your loss..."

Ten minutes later, seeing how Feng Xun was completely bruised from head to toe, Zhang Xuan couldn't bring himself to strike anymore.

He had already gone easy on the other party, but the other party was simply too weak. There wasn't the slightest feeling of accomplishment he felt from pummeling the other party.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan walked past Feng Xun, and after knocking on the door, he entered Luo Ruoxin's residence.

The young lady hadn't rested for the night yet. She was standing in the main hall, deeply contemplating something. On the other hand, Mu shi was standing at an area not too far away from her with his head lowered respectfully.

Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before speaking. "Just now, I..."

"Please leave. I intend to rest now." Luo Ruoxin waved her hand coldly.

"Erk..." Seeing how he was evicted right after arriving, Zhang Xuan was at a complete loss as to what he should do. His eyes couldn't help but swim toward Mu shi.

After a moment of hesitation, Mu shi coughed slightly before offering a friendly warning. "Senior Uncle, Feng Xun was chased away right after he confessed just a moment ago. Luo shi isn't in a good mood at the moment..."

"Confessed?" A deep frown appeared on Zhang Xuan's forehead.

"That's right." Mu shi nodded.

"Pardon me for a moment, I have some matters that I have to deal with right now." Turning around, Zhang Xuan left Luo Ruoxin's residence.

"Matters that you have to deal with right now?" Mu shi was stunned.

"Un. I just had a spar with Feng Xun, but thinking back, I think that it was disrespectful of me to have gone easy on someone who has challenged me so earnestly. I should at least give him a taste of the full extent of my might."

Shortly after Zhang Xuan left, screams of agony from a certain talented combat master resounded in the night.

Feng Xun had just been viciously pummeled, such that he could hardly bring himself to his feet to leave. How could he possibly be a match for the energetic Zhang Xuan?

"I didn't see anything," Mu shi mumbled beneath his breath, and he averted his gaze.

On the other hand, the eyes of the young lady not too far away curled into beautiful

crescents.

"Pfft."

A chuckle escaped her lips.

Chapter 1028

Opening of the Ancient Domain

At this moment, the thought of ending his life flashed through Feng Xun's mind.

He had thought that the other party had already exerted the full extent of his strength in the duel they had just a moment ago, but he realized that the other party hadn't even displayed a fifth of his true might.

In other words, with just a small portion of his strength, the other party was already able to crush him easily. Yet, somehow provoked by something, the other party was going all out against him at this very moment. Without a doubt, there was no way he could withstand the other party's strength. Under the vicious pummeling, he found that even his desire to live had been beaten out of him.

Honestly speaking...

What the heck is this? Didn't you say that it was just a friendly spar? On top of that, you had already won earlier... To rush back here to pummel me once more, what is going on?

Seeing how the other party was continuing to pummel him, Feng Xun couldn't stand it any longer. Releasing the cap on his cultivation, he raised his cultivation to Saint 1-dan. The outcome was that... there was no difference at all. He was still getting pummeled without fail.

What left him on the verge of spurring blood was that the other party didn't seem to have even noticed that his strength had increased!

Clenching his jaws, he raised his cultivation up to Saint 2-dan, but... the outcome still wasn't any different. He was still getting pummeled viciously!

He was a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, a top-notch genius who boasted the greatest fighting prowess among his peers. He could knock down even opponents stronger than him, and yet... even when his cultivation was two realms stronger than the fellow before him, he was still no match for the other party

at all.

The crushing blow to his pride left him on the verge of insanity.

*Forget it, to hell with my pride and dignity... * With a look of savagery, Feng Xun cast away his final shred of hesitation and released his full might.

With the entirety of his strength as a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert released, an incredible force burst forth from him, rattling even the sky.

"I will make you pay the price for your insolence..." Roaring furiously, he raised his fist to strike the other party, but before he could do so, the sight before him turned dark.

A leg had already arrived in front of his face.

Putting aside the immense strength that the kick harnessed, it was even aimed toward one of his cultivation mingmen. Barely a moment after he had roared excitedly, he was already back to convulsing powerlessly on the ground.

In that instant, an epiphany struck him... Treasure your life, distance yourself from Zhang Xuan!

He carried the reputation of a genius as well, but he didn't even come close to the level of the young man before him; there was a world of difference between their capabilities!

It was no wonder his direct disciple was qualified to challenge the Progeny of Combat Selection, and even a feeble-looking student whom he had barely begun teaching could floor the members of their Combat Master Hall.

The young man before him was a true monster!

After knocking Feng Xun out, Zhang Xuan finally succeeded in venting the frustrations within him. Stretching his back lazily, he felt refreshed once more. Turning around, he returned to Luo Ruoxin's residence.

However, before he could enter the residence, he saw Mu shi walking out from the doors.

"Senior Uncle, Luo shi has already retired for the night. She has said to leave whatever

you have to say until tomorrow."

"Ah..." Hearing that Luo Ruoxin didn't intend to meet him, Zhang Xuan could only return to his residence while scratching his head.

The night felt exceptionally long.

When dawn arrived, everyone was already gathered in the main hall of the Master Teacher Pavilion. After a night of recuperation, Feng Xun had mostly recovered from the pummeling he had suffered the previous night, but the swelling all over his body hadn't disappeared yet.

Upon seeing Feng Xun's current state, the leader of the expedition, Guild Leader Han, asked worriedly, "Combat Master Feng, what happened? Can you still join the expedition in your current state?"

The other party had been fine the day before, so how did he end up in such a state overnight?

Feng Xun hurriedly waved his hands. "I'm fine; I only met with some problems in my cultivation last night. I have already taken some medicine, so it won't pose any trouble."

To challenge a Nascent Saint and end up being pummeled badly instead... Even if someone were to threaten him with a knife on his throat, he would still be too embarrassed to admit it!

"You met with some problems in your cultivation?" Guild Leader Han shook his head.

He was not a master teacher, but that didn't mean he was a fool. How could someone end up with swelling all over his body from cultivation? It was apparent that he had been beaten up!

Nevertheless, since the other party was unwilling to speak, he wasn't interested in prying any further either. Thus, he quickly scanned through the crowd before nodding. "Alright. Since everyone is here, let's head over!"

The seal to the ancient domain was about to open, so it was time for them to set off.

Riding on the back of the saint beast, Zhang Xuan secretly sneaked Luo Ruoxin a peek.

Noting the composed look on the other party's face, seemingly not blaming him for the matter yesterday, he heaved a sigh of relief internally before heading up to her.

"Luo shi, there are many dangers lurking in the ancient domain. Why don't we team up together so that we can look after one another?"

"Sure." Luo Ruoxin nodded.

"That's great!"

Taking Luo Ruoxin's acceptance of his request as a sign to indicate that she wasn't angry at him, Zhang Xuan let out another sigh of relief.

A few minutes later, the massive Swallow Embracing Mountain came into sight once more.

The crowd landed on the ground.

The seal didn't seem to be much different than how it had been a few days earlier. The flag that Zhang Xuan had planted in the ground was still sitting quietly amid the formation, and surges of powerful energy were being released into the surroundings.

"According to my calculations, the seal will be opening today. However, I am not certain of the exact timing, so we will have to wait patiently," Guild Leader Han explained.

To be able to calculate the day of the opening of such a powerful seal was already an incredible feat in itself. To calculate its timing on top of that would be demanding too much from Guild Leader Han.

Understanding this fact, the crowd waited patiently on the spot. Around two hours later, some changes began occurring to the mist-like seal. The entire depression first turned crimson with a seven-colored bridge abruptly materializing before everyone's eyes.

"It's opening!" Upon noticing the changes, the eyes of the crowd lit up.

Guild Leader Han stepped forward to assess the situation in front for a moment before turning around to brief the crowd on the happenings. "That seven-colored bridge is the key to entering the seal. It will only appear for around fifteen minutes, so we should quickly enter!"

After saying those words, he took the lead.

The others quickly followed suit.

While the seven-colored bridge was made out of the energy harnessed by the formation, it didn't feel unsteady or wobbly in the least. On the contrary, it was exceptionally sturdy. Walking on it felt no different from walking anywhere else; it didn't feel dangerous at all.

Following behind the crowd, Zhang Xuan stepped onto the seven-colored bridge. The scenery around him, an azure sky with fleeting white clouds accompanied by a verdant mountain and an emerald lake, formed a stark contrast to the world beneath his feet, a dark abyss with occasional bursts of searing currents. Such vastly different existences placed together formed quite a mystical sight, leaving Zhang Xuan feeling as if he was standing on the intersection between two worlds.

To construct such a sturdy bridge out of emptiness, the person who created the ancient domain sure is fearsome, Zhang Xuan remarked internally.

Zhang Xuan was also capable of constructing a bridge that one could walk on out of his zhenqi, but to do so through a formation... that was far beyond his current capability.

It wasn't just him; even 7-star formation masters would be incapable of such a feat.

It seemed like Zhang Xuan's prior guess was right. The elder who had left behind the ancient domain was, at the very least, an 8-star formation master!

It was no wonder the old principal was so wary, leaving even a tombstone behind for himself in the Master Teacher Academy out of fear that he would never return.

Eye of Insight!

While Zhang Xuan proceeded forward, he focused his eyes toward the very end of the bridge.

Over there, a seven-colored light barrier was positioned perpendicularly to the bridge. Crimson lava flurried beyond the barrier, generating an immense amount of heat that seemed as if it would reduce any man to ash.

After studying it for a moment, Zhang Xuan frowned. *The structure of the light barrier... there is some resemblance to the seal in the Subterranean Gallery.*

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel that there was something uncanny about the light barrier, so he took a closer look. To his astonishment, he realized that it was nearly identical to the seal he had seen in the Subterranean Gallery, the only difference being that the one before him was a simplified version.

Nevertheless, it still harnessed incredible power that prevented anyone from barging through it forcefully. As long as it didn't open up, it would be impossible for anyone to enter.

Otherwise, the seal in the Subterranean Gallery wouldn't have kept the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe at bay for several dozen millennia either, only allowing a few small fries to slip through its defenses occasionally.

Before long, following the crowd in front of him, he arrived before the light barrier.

By this point, the others had also caught sight of the scenery that lay ahead of the light barrier, and their faces paled in horror.

"It's nothing but lava in front! It can't be that... the ancient domain lies in the midst of the lava?" one of the master teachers of the expedition exclaimed in shock.

With the temperature of the lava, even metal would melt in moments upon contact with it. Even though most members of the expedition had already reached Saint realm, they still dared not enter such a place haphazardly.

"The details I know about the ancient domain are severely limited. The only way we can find out is to explore it ourselves." Wu shi shook his head.

"Then..."

"Don't think too much about it. Since we are already here, let's just go in and take a look!" Wu shi said. However, there was still some hesitation on the faces of those around him, so after a moment of contemplation, he stepped forward and said, "How about this? I will try it out first, and if I meet with any danger, you all should evacuate the area quickly."

On top of being the highest-ranked master teacher among the group, he was the

strongest one as well. In face of danger, he was obliged to step forward to protect the others. If even he was unable to face whatever dangers lay within the lava, it was unlikely that the others would be able to either.

After saying those words, Wu shi channeled his zhenqi out from his acupoints and wrapped his body with it. Once that was done, he charged straight through the light barrier.

Hu!

Without the slightest impediment, 'huala!', Wu shi slid through the light barrier and disappeared from everyone's sight.

A few moments later, Wu shi's silhouette emerged once more. His figure was a little indistinct and vague, but his gesture was most certainly beckoning them over. Most likely, there was no danger within.

"Let's enter," Guild Leader Han said before stepping through the light barrier.

Zhang Xuan followed suit as well. The light barrier felt slightly viscous, reminiscent of the surface of water. Stepping through it, it was as if he had stepped into another world. Intense heat, as if omnipresent, assaulted him from all directions relentlessly, leaving his skin with a slightly stinging sensation.

Gazing downward, he realized that a ten kilometers wide enormous volcano vent stood beneath him. From time to time, flames would burst forth, threatening to devour the group whole.

Is the ancient domain really beneath the lava? Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had imagined that there would be some kind of passageway beyond the light barrier to lead the group into the ancient domain, but to his bewilderment, there was nothing but lava around him.

If the ancient domain was truly located beneath the lava, this expedition would be far more dangerous than he had previously imagined.

Putting aside the searing heat harnessed in the lava, just its sheer scale of the lava pool and the inability to see past the opaque lava made it extremely plausible that one could lose their way within, possibly never returning at all.

"Where do we go?"

The first person to enter, Wu shi, turned to Guild Leader Han with a deep frown on his face.

The other party was a formation master; perhaps, there might be some kind of formation hidden in the area that they were supposed to utilize to enter the ancient domain.

"Let me take a look." Nodding, Guild Leader Han took out a compass and paced around the massive vent of the volcano. Gradually, the frown on his forehead deepened.

"The spiritual energy current in this area is extremely stable; there is no formation hidden in the area. It seems like we can only slowly explore the area to find the entrance."

"Explore the area?" Looking at the lava pool, which boasted a diameter of ten kilometers, the lips of the crowd twitched uncontrollably.

How were they supposed to explore the area?

Were they to dive into the lava?

Even if their bodies could endure the heat, their clothes couldn't possibly do the same!

A bunch of 6-star and 7-star master teachers and combat masters walking past one another stark naked...

The image was so beautiful that it was more likely that they would die of embarrassment before they found the ancient domain!

Realizing the same, Zhang Xuan subconsciously turned his gaze toward Luo Ruoxin. With a deeply conflicted expression, he mumbled unknowingly beneath his breath, "If her clothes were to be burnt as well, should I look... or not look?"

Just as Zhang Xuan was deep in thought over the serious problem he was facing, he suddenly heard a feminine voice quivering with rage beside him.

"You... What kind of nonsense are you thinking about?"

Chapter 1029

The Fearsome Lava (1)

Turning his gaze over, he saw Luo Ruoxin's face flushed crimson, seemingly ready to explode at any moment.

While others were thinking about how they should find the entrance to the ancient domain, that fellow was assessing her from head to toe. With a look, it was apparent that he was thinking of nothing good!

"Cough cough!" Not expecting that the other party would catch him contemplating over an issue as serious as that, Zhang Xuan choked on his saliva. Posturing himself upright, he replied with a dignified tone, "I was just thinking that our line of thought might have been wrong in the start. Considering how large the lava pool is, I don't think that we are meant to search every inch of it. So, I have been thinking that it might be a trial from the master of the ancient domain instead."

"A trial?" Realizing that she had misunderstood Zhang Xuan when he was contemplating over such serious issues, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but feel a little embarrassed.

"That's right!"

Standing in midair, Zhang Xuan glanced at the lava pool before him and gestured grandly. "If the master of the ancient domain didn't intend for anyone to enter the land he had created, he wouldn't have constructed his formation so that it opened up once in a while, allowing others to enter. Since he has done so, I think that could be taken as a sign that the ancient domain is something that he intended to leave for the later generations, and the lava is most likely the first trial that those who seek the ancient domain have to undergo. Only those who manage to clear this trial will be able to advance further in."

"This..." Luo Ruoxin pondered over Zhang Xuan's words for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Zhang Xuan's words made perfect sense. A formation master who could create such a

powerful seal couldn't have possibly made the grave mistake of having the seal open every now and then. In other words, it was likely that the opening of the seal was an effect that the master of the ancient domain had intended right from the start.

Luo Ruoxin turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Then... are you able to deduce the intention behind this pool of lava? That will likely be the key that leads us to the true entrance of the ancient domain."

"I am still in the midst of figuring that out," Zhang Xuan replied calmly as he secretly heaved a sigh of relief within.

It was fortunate that he had reacted swiftly. Otherwise, if the other party were to learn of his thoughts, she might very well have strangled him to death on the spot.

Forget it, I should put those thoughts aside for the moment. Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan tossed aside the miscellaneous thoughts in his mind and began assessing the situation before him.

The lava beneath flurried furiously, reminiscent of boiling water. Even without approaching it, one could still vividly feel the intolerable heat that it emitted, seemingly attempting to roast one alive.

Activating the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan began studying the area carefully.

Unfortunately, the vent of the volcano was filled with a thick layer of smoke puffing up, similar to that of a sauna room filled with steam, making it difficult for one to see through it.

After scanning the area, Zhang Xuan found no trace of any formation at all. In fact, even the flow of spiritual energy was indistinct to him here.

Could the ancient domain be within a folded space? Frowning, Zhang Xuan was just about to communicate with the Myriad Anthive Queen to have the latter search the area when he suddenly heard a voice.

"This doesn't seem to be ordinary lava..."

Turning his gaze toward the source of the voice, Zhang Xuan saw Wu shi and Guild Leader Han standing side by side. At this moment, the latter had an astonished look on his face, as if he had noticed something bewildering.

The others in the area had also noticed the anomaly with Guild Leader Han, and they turned perplexed looks toward him as well.

"Take a look!"

As he said those words, Guild Leader Han flicked his wrist, and a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon appeared in his grasp. With a swing of his arm, the weapon flew straight toward the lava.

Putong!

As soon as the weapon came into contact with the lava, a sizzling sound immediately echoed loudly in the air. Within just a few moments, it had already been reduced to liquid, disappearing completely from sight.

"The lava... is able to melt even a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon?" Everyone was petrified by what they had just seen.

While they knew that venturing into the searing lava would be dangerous, they had thought that they would at least be able to last for a decent period of time without sustaining any damage with their Saint realm cultivation. However, upon seeing this sight, they realized that they had been severely underestimating the dangers of the lava!

The head of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, Wo Tianqiong, hesitated for a brief moment before exclaiming in astonishment, "That is... Earth Core Lava!"

"Earth Core Lava?"

The term was foreign to the crowd, so they directed questioning gazes toward Wo Tianqiong, gesturing for him to continue on.

"I have read books on volcanoes in the past, and it is stated that the temperature of lava grows higher and higher the deeper one goes. Of them, the lava that boasts the greatest heat is the Earth Core Lava. With just a single drip, it can melt Spirit-tier artifacts and even Saint-tier artifacts! While the one before us doesn't harness as much heat as that, it is clear that the heat it possesses is far beyond that of ordinary lava. Most likely, what lies on the other side of the lava pool isn't the ancient domain but an earth core!" Wo Tianqiong analyzed.

"This..." The crowd frowned.

"Regardless of whether that is true or not, we will know once we take a look!" Wu shi said. "You all wait here for a moment; I will head down to take a look."

"Given how hot the lava at the surface is, the heat you will have to face beneath is bound to be even more frightening. Will you be fine?" Guild Leader Han asked worriedly.

"I ran a rough calculation earlier, and with my current cultivation, I should be able to venture around a hundred meters in. Don't worry, I will rush out the moment I sense any danger." Wu shi nodded grimly. "We will be stuck here if we don't try to do anything. At this rate, it is just a matter of time before we succumb as well."

While they were flying above the vent, placing them some distance away from the lava, the heat that they had to endure was still considerable due to the seal above them locking the heat in. For the time being, they were still able to endure it through their zhenqi, but it would only be a matter of time before they ran out of zhenqi and succumbed to the heat.

"You're right. Be careful then..." Knowing that Wu shi was right, Guild Leader Han hesitated for a moment before nodding.

"Un, I will be fine," Wu shi replied with a smile.

The next moment, his face suddenly turned grim as he drove the zhenqi in his body furiously. An incredible aura burst forth, and it warped into the form of a majestic dragon. Then, his figure abruptly dashed downward, heading toward the lava.

Huala!

Parting the lava beneath him with forceful might, Wu shi dived in.

"Ah..." Zhang Xuan hadn't expected Wu shi to move so quickly. He had intended to persuade the latter against it, given the unknown dangers that could have been lurking beneath the lava, but he had been a little too slow.

After a moment of hesitation, he decided to swallow his words. Perhaps, this might be for the best. He still hadn't made sense out of the situation yet, and perhaps Wu shi might be able to uncover new clues for them.

Gugugugu!

It took only an instant for the lava to fill the opening that Wu shi had made earlier. Nevertheless, the bubbles that surfaced continuously indicated that there was someone moving beneath the surface.

Seeing the sight below, a combat master couldn't help but ask worriedly, "Will he be fine?"

"On top of being a Saint 4-dan expert, Wu shi is also a capable master teacher who possesses many means. Even if he meets with danger, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to flee back up," Guild Leader Han replied after a moment of hesitation.

To reassure the others, his words were confident. However, he was still unable to fully conceal the worry in his eyes.

Clearly, even he had no way of saying for sure whether Wu shi would be fine or not.

"Don't worry, Wu shi might not be strongest cultivator of our Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, but he is definitely the one who wields the most life preservation means. This is also why our Master Teacher Pavilion decided to dispatch him for this expedition," Mu shi said with a smile.

"Life preservation means?" Everyone was bewildered.

"Indeed. Wu shi cultivates a unique movement technique known as the 'Star Weaving Steps'. Through it, he can move at speeds comparable to even Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm experts. While it does deplete his zhenqi swiftly, there is no doubt that it is an invaluable asset in times of danger!

"As searing as the lava beneath is, with Wu shi's strength and means, escaping safely shouldn't be a problem for him. Besides, since the master of the ancient domain has left a Life Gate on the seal for us to enter, it didn't make sense for him to try to kill us right afterwards."

The eyes of the crowd lit up in realization, and they heaved a sigh of relief.

Indeed! If even a 7-star pinnacle master teacher would be scorched to death right after entering the lava, wasn't this ancient domain a little too difficult?

If that was the case, how could You Xu have gotten out alive?

Besides, there was no reason for the elder who had created the ancient domain to design it in such a manner if he was just trying to kill them.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The other party's thoughts were similar to his.

Since the master of the ancient domain had left a visible opening to the ancient domain, it was clear that they intended for others to enter it. The trials were dangerous and difficult to clear, but there would definitely be a solution.

Hu!

Around eight minutes later, just when everyone was starting to panic, a loud explosion sounded from the lava, and a figure darted back up.

"Wu shi..." The crowd hurriedly turned their gazes over, and upon seeing what was before them, their eyebrows leaped up in astonishment.

Wu shi was in a completely different state compared to before he entered the lava. The clothes on his body had disintegrated, leaving him stark naked. If not for the massive dragon he had formed using his zhenqi that was concealing various parts of his body, he might have just died of embarrassment on the spot.

However, his clothes being reduced to ash was just the least of the worries. More importantly, his face was completely pale, and he was panting heavily, as if he had just fled from something extremely fearsome.

There were even some portions of his skin that were charred black, creating a particularly gruesome sight.

Guild Leader Han hurried forward and asked, "What happened?"

On the other hand, Wu shi swiftly swallowed a pill to recuperate his zhenqi before putting on another set of clothes from his storage ring.

"The temperature within the lava is higher than I thought," Wu shi explained with a bitter smile. "I swiftly ventured downward as soon as I entered. I thought that with my

stamina and zhenqi, reaching the hundred-meter mark wouldn't be an issue for me. However... the temperature increased faster than I thought it would. By the time I reached the thirty-meter mark, I could already feel myself approaching my limit. The rate at which my zhenqi was depleting from fending away the lava was already double the rate when I was at the surface!

"With great difficulty, I managed to reach the forty-meter mark. However, by then, my zhenqi had already depleted by half. Knowing that it would be difficult for me to return if I were to venture any deeper, I decided to turn around at that point and rush back. Nevertheless, I still nearly depleted my zhenqi and died inside!"

"Even you were only able to reach the forty-meter mark?" Wo Tianqiong was astonished.

Wu shi's strength was the greatest of them all, and yet, he had only been able to venture forty meters deep into the lava. Through this, it wasn't too difficult to imagine how fearsome the lava was.

"Did you notice anything?" Guild Leader Han probed.

Wu shi shook his head. "It is nothing but lava below; I wasn't able to see anything at all. Furthermore, there was a powerful pressure crushing down on me below, limiting my Spiritual Perception to only ten meters. Anything more than that is beyond my means. I tried to peer downward when I was at the forty meters mark, and based on what I saw, it seems like there is still a very long distance away before reaching the end of the lava."

"Your Spiritual Perception can only extend to ten meters?"

"There is still a long distance away before reaching the end?"

The faces of the crowd warped in horror.

Wu shi was the one who possessed the strongest cultivation in the expedition team, and even Guild Leader Han wouldn't be a match for him.

Yet, an expert of his caliber could only extend his Spiritual Perception ten meters into the lava. Just how long would it take for them to scan the enormous volcano that had a diameter of ten kilometers?

Furthermore, if the entrance of the ancient domain was truly located within the lava... would they really be able to enter it?

"Indeed. When I was at the surface, my Spiritual Perception could still extend several hundred meters away. However, the deeper I went, the greater the constraint on my Spiritual Perception. Eventually, when I reached my limit, forty meters deep, I could only extend it ten meters." Wu shi shook his head.

"If you could only persist for forty meters, and there was still a long distance to go before reaching the other side... how are we going to find the entrance to the ancient domain like that?"

The crowd glanced at one another with helpless looks on their faces.

After waiting for the opening of the seal for so long, were they going to be stuck right before the entrance, unable to do a thing at all?

Just as everyone was overwhelmed with despair from being unable to venture any further, someone among the crowd suddenly shouted, "Sh*t, the opening to the seal has closed up, too!"

Everyone hurriedly turned around to take a look, only to see that the light barrier had reverted back to its initial white color. The seven-colored bridge from a moment ago had also vanished from sight, as if signifying the complete closure of the seal.

Chapter 1030

The Fearsome Lava (2)

One of the master teachers tried to pass through the light barrier as he had done before, but as if ramming into a wall of concrete steel, he was knocked back by a powerful might.

"This..." The eyes of the master teacher narrowed in disbelief. "How are we to leave now?"

He wasn't the only who reacted in such a manner. There were also several other master teachers who rushed up to the seal to try it too, and upon realizing that they were unable to pass through it as well, their faces paled in horror.

Passing through the seven-colored light barrier from before had been extremely easy for them. It was just like diving into water, not impeding them at all. However, the current white, misty barrier before them was like a thick block of steel in their path; no matter how they rammed at it, it just wouldn't budge.

In other words, they were completely trapped! If they couldn't find the way to advance into the ancient domain, they would be trapped there with the lava until the next opening of the seal, provided they could survive till then.

"No wonder you told us that we might face great peril in the expedition, the ancient domain is indeed fearsome," one of the master teachers muttered to himself.

Before they joined the expedition, Wu shi and the others had repeatedly warned them that great peril lay in the expedition of the ancient domain, and they could very well meet their death there. Back then, they had thought that it was just an exaggeration, and they had not thought much of it.

In the end, before they had even entered the ancient domain, they had already found themselves helplessly lost. If that was the case, it was difficult to imagine the sheer extent of danger they would face in the ancient domain.

Guild Leader Han shook his head and said, "I said earlier that the seal would close

within fifteen minutes. It is impossible to open it once more. The only choice we have now is to trudge forward!

"It is pointless to dwell on this matter anymore. All of us joined this expedition knowing that we would face such dangerous situations. At this point, the only thing we can do is find the entrance to the ancient domain."

"Un." The crowd nodded.

Having been warned of the dangers from participating in the expedition, most of the expedition members had already prepared in case something unfortunate befell them in the midst of exploring the ancient domain. Since it was already impossible for them to back out at this point, they could only muster their courage and advance forward.

Understanding the same logic, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze back to the lava. At the same time, he forged a remote communication with the Myriad Anthive Queen.

Before long, the Myriad Anthive Queen replied, "Master, there is no folded space in the area. Even if there is one, it is most likely beneath the lava, where I am unable to sense it."

"There is no folded space in the area?" Zhang Xuan's expression turned stern.

Could it be that the entrance to the ancient domain really lay beneath the lava?

But even Wu shi was unable to venture too far down, let alone them!

It was only the entrance of the ancient domain they were at, surely it wasn't designed to be so difficult?

If that was truly the case, how did the old principal and his team managed to enter the ancient domain back then?

It is a pity that I failed to obtain the map from the Poison Hall, or else we wouldn't be in such a helpless position now. Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

If he had managed to obtain the map, he would have been able to find the route in easily. He wouldn't have been in such a difficult position at the moment.

Forget it, there is no point brooding over it now. I should try to use the Library of

Heaven's Path and see if I can find anything instead. Tossing away those negative thoughts in his mind, Zhang Xuan descended toward the lava.

As the lava was a non-living object, it couldn't possibly utilize battle techniques or that sort. Thus, the only way to make the Library of Heaven's Path to compile a book on it was through touch.

Seeing Zhang Xuan flying toward the lava, Mu shi couldn't help but exclaim in shock, "Senior Uncle, what are you doing?"

Knowing that he couldn't reveal the matter regarding the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "I am just taking a closer look at the lava."

A moment later, he was standing right above the lava. An intense wave of heat assaulted him, penetrating through his skin to sear even his bones, seemingly intent on reducing him to a crisp.

Scorching! Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed in astonishment.

It was no wonder Wu shi was only able to venture forty meters in. The temperature in the area was far more frightening than he could have imagined. Even if he were to exert his full strength, thirty meters would probably be his limit.

Driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, Zhang Xuan expelled the heat out of his body before extending his hand toward the lava.

Flaws! Zhang Xuan willed.

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"This lava is made out of rocks melted under the heat of the earth flames. It harnesses great heat within. It is made out of Bluedark Rock, Granite, Lapis, and many other minerals. Once solidified, it is an ideal material to construct a house..."

Upon reading the description in the book, Zhang Xuan staggered and nearly fell to the ground.

Construct a house... Construct your head!

That is not what I want to know, alright?

As stifled as Zhang Xuan felt within, it was somewhat within his expectations. The Library of Heaven's Path could only analyze the very item that he was touching at that instant and reveal its details.

This was similar to the many times he had attempted to collect multiple books into the Library of Heaven's Path simultaneously through touching the bookshelves, only to receive information on the material of the bookshelf instead.

Similarly, touching the lava only reflected the unique properties of the lava and not the flaws of the entire volcano.

In other words, the seemingly omnipotent Library of Heaven's Path was useless in this situation.

What could he do?

Rubbing his glabella in frustration, Zhang Xuan had no choice but to return to the others.

Seeing that even the miracle-producing Principal Zhang had been forced to retreat helplessly from the lava, disappointment surfaced in the eyes of Guild Leader Han. Sighing deeply, he instructed, "If it comes down to it, we will just have to allocate a region to each person and explore the lava pool bit by bit. Since the seal can be opened, I figure that the ancient domain shouldn't be located too deep into the lava. As long as we work together, we should be able to find some clues about the ancient domain's location!"

"Explore the lava pool bit by bit?" With grave expressions, the crowd nodded.

This was the only measure they could take at the moment.

Since there was no formation or anything hidden above the lava, there was a very good chance that the ancient domain was hidden beneath the lava. With no other alternatives at that moment, they could only comb the lava inch by inch, praying that they would find something soon.

"If... the ancient domain is located beyond forty meters beneath the surface of the lava, what should we do?" the head of Luoqing Master Teacher Academy, Shen Pingchao,

asked with a deep frown.

Upon hearing those words, the crowd couldn't help nod in agreement as well.

Since even Wu shi was only able to reach forty meters deep, there was no way they could go beyond that. It would be great if they could find the ancient domain within the top forty meters of the lava, but if it was located beneath that point, there was no way they would be able to find it!

At this point, Luo Ruoxin spoke up as well. "Combing the area isn't a feasible solution."

Guild Leader Han turned to Luo Ruoxin and asked, "Oh? Does Luo shi have a suggestion to offer?"

"Just as the others have said, if the ancient domain is located more than forty meters beneath the surface of the lava, there is no way we will be able to find it. Furthermore, considering the sheer scale of the lava vent and how there are only thirty of us here, how long do you think it will take us to finish combing the area?" Luo Ruoxin said with a frown.

"This..." Guild Leader Han was stumped.

While most of the expedition members did possess Spiritual Perception, Wu shi had said earlier that its range of effectiveness would gradually be compressed the further one delved into the lava.

Furthermore, they would be unable to stay within the lava for extended periods of time either. At this rate, they would probably run out of zhenqi and succumb to the heat before they were able to find the ancient domain.

"What should we do then?" one of the master teachers asked.

"I am not too sure either. However, since the master of the ancient domain left a Life Gate in the seal for others to enter, there is bound to be a route that we can take; it is just that we haven't thought of it yet. As the saying goes, the sharpening of the axe is the key to woodcutting 1. Instead of fumbling around, it would be better for us to first identify our goal before making a move. That should heighten our chances of success," Luo Ruoxin said.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

She was right. Spreading their net thin in hopes of striking lucky was a luxury they couldn't afford.

The circumstances they were in were simply too poor. Persisting for an hour, two hours, or ten hours was still doable for them. However, beyond a day, the fire poison would probably start to set in. Two days, and they would already be too feeble from the constant assault of the heat to search the area, and it wouldn't be too long before they were reduced to dried meat.

"Indeed. We have to first have a concrete idea in mind before carrying it out." Zhang Xuan nodded as he turned his gaze back to the lava once more.

The volcano vent was circular in shape, and at irregular intervals, a powerful spurt of lava would burst forth and strike the seal above them, creating a deafening explosion.

It was fortunate that they had released the energies accumulated in the seal before, or else there was no doubt that the powerful spurt of lava would have induced a huge explosion within here.

A thought suddenly surfaced in Zhang Xuan's head. Could the key be related to... the strength of these lava spurts?

He was certain that the old principal and You Xu didn't have to go through so much effort to enter the ancient domain. Based on You Xu's testimony, the group back then had encountered an energy storm as soon as they stepped through the light barrier, and it was then that You Xu had been swept into an unknown area and met with the Otherworldly Demons.

Energy storm... In other words, when they first entered, the seal was permeated with an overwhelmingly powerful force.

Could the 'energy storm' have been referring to the energies released during the opening of the seal?

If that was the case, it would mean that, while his earlier release of the energies had made the insides of the seal significantly safer, it had also effectively terminated their route to the entrance of the ancient domain.

Wait, if that is the case... does it mean that the area where the energies would have burst forth from during the opening of the seal is the area where the entrance of the

ancient domain is located?

If You Xu wasn't lying, that could very well be the case.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned his gaze toward the lava to examine it closely.

Coincidentally, a burst of energy surged forth from the lava at this moment. It came into contact with the area where his formation flag was planted previously, and it disappeared without a trace.

The point where he had planted the flag was where the greatest opening of the seal was located, and it prevented any energies from building up within the seal. As a result, the lava was relatively calmer, such that he had even forgotten about this matter himself.

I should give it a try! Zhang Xuan nodded in resolution.

Regardless of whether his conclusion was correct or not, the only way he could know for sure was to test it out personally. And honestly speaking, he couldn't think of anything else other than that.

The Library of Heaven's Path doesn't work on the lava, so the only way I can really check on it is to venture in. Wu shi is still in the midst of recuperating from his previous exertion, so I can only do it personally!

Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a huge cauldron appeared before him.

The Golden Origin Cauldron!

With the previous breakthrough, that fellow had already become a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, granting it strength on par with Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts. While its fighting prowess might pale in comparison to veteran experts like Wu shi, in terms of resistance to heat, the latter definitely came nowhere close to matching it.

The abrupt action from Zhang Xuan drew gazes from the crowd to him. Upon taking a look, they couldn't help but freeze in astonishment.

"The Golden Origin Cauldron... has become a Saint intermediate-tier artifact?"

Most of them were aware of the existence of the famed Guardian Saint Artifact of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but according to what they knew, it should only have been a Saint low-tier artifact. When did it advance to intermediate-tier?

There might only be a minor tier difference between low-tier and intermediate-tier, but the power disparity between the two was immense, as if the gap between heaven and earth.

"A blacksmith student whom Master took in on a whim yesterday night helped reforge my magnificent body, and in the midst of doing so, I advanced to intermediate-tier. What? Are you all envious?"

Seeing the shocked gazes directed toward it, the Golden Origin Cauldron burst into hearty laughter, and with blatant glee in its voice, it continued boasting.

"There is really no need for you all to envy me. It is only due to my outstanding talent that I am able to achieve breakthroughs so easily. The likes of you can't possibly hope to emulate my greatness."

Chapter 1031

Entering the Lava

"Shut up!" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

"Roger that!" Hearing the bellow from its master, the Golden Origin Cauldron immediately fell silent, not daring to say another word.

Even though it had halted its words halfway through, the content that it had revealed thus far was more than enough for the others to make sense of the situation. Their gazes couldn't help but drift to Zhang Xuan.

"Took in an apprentice as his blacksmith student on a whim?"

"Reforge the Golden Origin Cauldron? Principal Zhang, what is going on?"

As a Saint low-tier artifact, it would at least take the strength of a 7-star blacksmith to reforge it and raise its grade. Yet, an apprentice that he had taken in as his blacksmith student on a whim had actually reforged it? What was going on?

A blacksmith apprentice... was someone who hadn't even passed the 1-star blacksmith examination yet, right? How could such a person help to reforge a Saint low-tier artifact?

"Last night, I met an apprentice who was trying to end his life..." Noting everyone's gaze on him, Zhang Xuan began explaining the matter that had happened the previous night. It was no secret anyway, so there was no need for him to hide it.

"An apprentice who couldn't even smith a Mortal-tier weapon was actually able to upgrade the Golden Origin Cauldron with just an hour of guidance from you?"

"T-this... Surely that is impossible." Hearing the story, the crowd felt incredibly frenzied.

To actually guide an apprentice in reforging his Saint low-tier artifact... Just how confident did one have to be to dare do such a thing?

Just how deep of an understanding of smithing did one have to command to be capable of pulling off such a feat?

"I have long heard that Principal Zhang possesses incredible smithing mastery, but this... it seems like I have still been underestimating him."

"Indeed. Just by this feat alone, it can be seen that his grasp over smithing is on par with 7-star pinnacle blacksmiths."

"How can we ever expect to match up with that?"

The principals of the other three Master Teacher Academies couldn't help but sigh bitterly at this point.

They had learned from Zhao Bingxu's words that the young man before them possessed an astounding mastery of smithing. All along, they had thought that 6-star pinnacle would be the cap, especially considering the other party's young age. However, upon hearing this, they realized that they had been taking Zhang Xuan too lightly.

One must know that even a real 7-star pinnacle blacksmith couldn't possibly guide an apprentice into successfully reforging a Saint low-tier artifact!

Different from what the others were focused on, Luo Ruoxin looked at the young man before her with widened eyes and asked, "You... After parting from me, you saved a person and tore away the hypocritical mask of an elder of the Blacksmith Guild?"

Zhang Xuan nodded. "Un. I was intending to follow you after you left, but it was then that I saw someone attempting to end his life. It was due to this incident that I eventually came late!"

"I see..." Luo Ruoxin shook her head helplessly.

She had thought that the other party was pig-headed when he didn't pursue her the previous night, and she had even flown into a rage over it. However, it seemed like she had misunderstood the other party.

As a master teacher, protecting the sanctity and dignity of teaching was clearly more important than one's own personal matters.

Nevertheless, despite knowing that he had been misunderstood, he didn't use this matter as an excuse to justify himself. Had it not been for the Golden Origin Cauldron bragging about the matter, she would probably have remained ignorant of it. His character was truly worthy of respect.

Not dwelling on the matter, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and explained, "I am guessing that the ancient domain might be located at the crux of where the energy is being released from in the lava. Thus, I intend to head in to take a look."

"The crux of where the energy is being released from?"

The crowd frowned.

"Considering the rampaging energies that are bound to be at the crux, even if there is a formation or folded space there, it would have been destroyed long ago. How could the ancient domain possibly be constructed there?" Guild Leader Han remarked.

He had taken that point into his analysis as well, and it was also the first possibility that he had eliminated.

The energies that had accumulated in the lava were so great that should an explosion occur, everything within a radius of a thousand kilometers would be reduced to ashes. Under the constant assault of such a powerful force, even the stablest of folded spaces or formations would have been destroyed long ago!

"I can't deny that, but the very energy that could be used to destroy the formation could also be used to sustain it! There are strengths and weaknesses to it, and with our limited understanding of formations, there is no way we can make a conclusive judgement on the matter. The only way to find out is to head down ourselves," Zhang Xuan replied with a wave of his hand.

"This..." Guild Leader Han's mouth opened to refute Zhang Xuan's words, but to his surprise, he found that the other party's words were logical as well.

As the saying goes, 'water can float a boat or sink it'. A powerful might could destroy the formation, but if a formation master could tap into it well, it could also become a powerful source of energy that further reinforced the might of the formation.

Of course, that would be a matter for higher ranked formation masters to frustrate over. With their current level of proficiency, it was still too far away for them.

"Alright, I will be going in to take a look!"

After explaining the matter, Zhang Xuan beckoned the Golden Origin Cauldron over and leaped into its body.

With the massive size of the Golden Origin Cauldron, it could easily house three to four people in it without trouble. Thus, Zhang Xuan could hide within it while exploring the depths of the lava.

Zhang Xuan did consider sending the Golden Origin Cauldron alone—that would have been much safer for him—but considering the unreliable nature of the cauldron, it was questionable whether it would be able to provide him with any useful information or not. Thus, he decided to make the trip down personally.

Seeing Zhang Xuan leap into the cauldron, Luo Ruoxin couldn't help but exclaim worriedly, "Be careful!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan flashed Luo Ruoxin a smile before fully entering the Golden Origin Cauldron.

"Here I go!" With an excited exclamation, the Golden Origin Cauldron began charging toward the area where the energies in the lava were originating from.

The previous blast of energy had just occurred a moment ago, and judging from the past occurrences, there would be a ten minutes interval before the next one. He could make use of this interval to dive in. Otherwise, if they were caught in the explosion, it was questionable if the Golden Origin Cauldron would be able to take the impact.

Gugugugu!

As soon as the massive cauldron descended into the lava, bubbles began popping up at the surface. Seated within the cauldron, Zhang Xuan felt heat assaulting him from all directions.

The Golden Origin Cauldron was a weapon cauldron, specially forged to retain heat so that it could melt even the most durable of metals. Given so, it was inevitable that heat would seep into the cauldron from the surroundings. While Zhang Xuan wouldn't come into direct contact with the lava by hiding within the Golden Origin Cauldron, given the sealed environment that he was in, the heat he would have to endure was nowhere beneath the heat outside.

Zhang Xuan began driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, and the heat assaulting him alleviated significantly. A moment later, he stood up and said, "Ding Ding, stop!"

"Here?" The Golden Origin Cauldron was taken aback.

They had barely entered the lava, not having even ventured ten meters deep. To stop at this point... why?

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "There is no need to go too deep... Wait here for me!"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan drew out his soul from his glabella and slipped into the lava.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron had raised its cultivation significantly, its limit was unlikely to be much more than forty meters. Furthermore, it was also doubtful if he would be able to tolerate the heat while hiding within the Golden Origin Cauldron if they were to venture too deep. In truth, the reason he had gotten the Golden Origin Cauldron to enter the lava with him was to protect his physical body.

His true goal was to venture in the lava with his soul!

Due to the intangible nature of souls, while his soul would still be affected by the immense heat of the lava, the extent to which he was affected was significantly lower as compared to that of his physical body. Furthermore, he could also move freely around the area without being affected by the crushing pressure of the lava, allowing him to dive deeper and possibly uncover more secrets.

Indeed, it is as I expected! By entering the lava, not only is my soul undamaged by the heat, I can even absorb the surrounding energy to strengthen it! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

As his soul was cultivated through the Heaven's Path Soul Art, he didn't suffer from Searing Yang Decline like other souls would, making him near impervious to heat. Had it been any other soul oracle, putting aside entering the lava, their soul would have already dissipated into nothingness just from the heat inside the cauldron!

This heat is ideal for refining weapons and ridding the impurities within. Could it be used to temper my soul too?

While a soul was intangible, just like Primordial Spirits, they were very much existent

in this world. Since this heat could refine weapons, perhaps it could refine a soul as well?

I should give it a try.

Thus, leaving his soul floating freely in the lava, he began absorbing the heat from the surroundings slowly.

Tzzzzzzz!

A searing surge of energy began gushing into Zhang Xuan's soul. Under the tempering of the intense heat, his soul began to grow stronger and stronger. Just like he had imagined, the impurities contained within his soul were also being expelled continuously.

As I expected, it works!

He had been thinking that his soul was a little too bloated all along, making it a little troublesome for him to squeeze into his body. He had been wanting to refine it for a while now, but he hadn't been able to find a way to do so. The immense heat within the lava happened to be an ideal opportunity for him to do so.

However, this isn't the time for me to cultivate yet. While my soul might be unaffected by the burst of energies that occur once every ten minutes, the same cannot be said about the Golden Origin Cauldron. There is a chance that it could be blasted away by the sheer might of it, and that will pose significant trouble to me.

Even though Zhang Xuan wanted to cultivate and temper his soul, he knew that this wasn't the right time for him to do so. Thus, he stopped what he was doing and began diving further into the lava.

The most important thing for him to do at the moment was find the entrance to the ancient domain. As for cultivation, he would have plenty of opportunities to do so later on.

Just as Wu Shi had said, the temperature grew higher and higher the further he ventured downward. Every ten meters he descended, the heat in the surroundings intensified significantly.

*According to my calculations, the limit for Saint 1-dan cultivators is ten meters, the

limit for Saint 2-dan cultivators is twenty meters, so on and so forth. As a Saint 4-dan expert, the limit for Wu shi is forty meters. Anything further is beyond his scope of abilities!*

Zhang Xuan's soul ventured downward swiftly. In just a few breaths, he had already reached the forty-meter mark. Upon sensing the change in the temperature at this boundary, he came up with a deduction.

The forty-meter mark sure is warm. Even in my soul state, it is still a little hard to bear.

The previous thirty meters had not posed much of a threat to his soul, but as soon as he reached the forty-meter mark, the heat around him suddenly intensified greatly. The relentless assault of blazing heat was difficult for even his soul to withstand.

Continue on!

Driving his Heaven's Path Soul Art to alleviate the heat, Zhang Xuan broke the forty-meter mark and continued diving deeper.

As soon as he treaded beyond the forty-meter mark, he suddenly felt as if he had been thrown into a pot of oil. Despite the superior durability of his soul, it still began distorting out of shape under the assault of the overwhelming heat, seemingly ready to dissipate very soon.

Zhang Xuan's face darkened. *This isn't working. This is a region that only Leaving Aperture realm experts are able to enter. Even in my soul form, I am already at my limit.*

He had been thinking of venturing deeper in the lava by utilizing the inherent advantage of his soul's resistance to heat. However, from the looks of it, it seemed like he had underestimated how hot the lava was.

Considering how even a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm master teacher had nearly succumbed at the forty-meter mark, it was already rather incredible that his Transcendent Mortal 9-dan soul could come this far as well.

Enduring the pain, Zhang Xuan tried to trudge on forcefully, but upon crossing the fifty-meter mark, he felt that his soul was starting to dissipate. He was at his limit.

An increase in temperature signified an increase in the activity of a material at its fundamental level, thus making its existing structure unstable. This was similar to how solid weapons melted into metallic fluids under intense heat.

Souls couldn't exactly be considered a material, but when the temperature grew too high, even space itself would become unstable, let alone a mere soul.

Alarmed, Zhang Xuan hurriedly retreated back to the fifty-meter mark, and only then did he finally feel the dissipation of his soul stopping. At this point, he couldn't help but frown in distress.

I have already reached the fifty-meter mark, but the ancient domain is still nowhere to be seen. Could it be that my deduction is wrong and it is not located here?

He had come this far, but there was nothing to be seen. The only thing that was notable was the progressively increasing temperature. Just as Wo Tianqiong had said earlier, he was probably coming close to the Earth Core Lava.

At a place as warm as that, even formation flags would melt and folded spaces would collapse. Could he really have been wrong?

While Zhang Xuan was in the midst of contemplating, a rumbling suddenly echoed from beneath like a huge machine coming into life.

With narrowed eyes, Zhang Xuan saw an immense energy blasting straight in his direction.

*Sugar! Why did the energies burst prematurely this time around? This is bad, really bad... *

Chapter 1032

Great Heaven Reversal Formation

That force was powerful and ferocious. Reminiscent of a rampaging tsunami, before Zhang Xuan could do anything, it was already right before him.

He hurriedly turned around to flee, but right when he was about to do so, the ferocious energy tore a line right through the lava, and at the very end, rows after rows of buildings came into sight. In that moment, Zhang Xuan felt as if he was seeing a mirage.

It is indeed below the lava. Barely after this thought surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind, he felt an overwhelming force crushing down on him. Unable to withstand it, he ended up tumbling his way up.

Hong long!

Following which, he saw the Golden Origin Cauldron, swept by the immense force, blasting forcefully out of the lava, striking heavily onto the seal. A resounding chime reverberated in the air.

It was fortunate that the fellow had advanced to Saint intermediate-tier earlier, and he had released the accumulated energies beforehand. Otherwise, this single strike could have killed both the Golden Origin Cauldron and his body within.

"Principal Zhang!"

"Zhang shi!"

"Senior Uncle!"

Seeing the Golden Origin Cauldron being knocked out by the violent spurt of lava, the crowd that had been waiting outside for Zhang Xuan leaped in shock. They hurriedly rushed toward the Golden Origin Cauldron to check on their condition.

This is bad! Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed in alarm.

Only his physical body was in the cauldron at the moment. If he attempted to return under such conditions, the master teachers, with their superior eyes of discernment, would surely notice that he was a soul oracle. Once that happened, he would be in deep trouble!

If it was discovered that the esteemed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy practiced the arts of the heinous soul oracles, how would others view him?

But if his soul didn't return to his body, his body would remain cold and lifeless, no different from a corpse. If those fellows thought that he had died and attempt to cremate him... it would be too late for tears then!

To make matters worse, his body possessed the ability of Mind of Void. It would react instinctively before danger, so if any of them tried to cremate him, his body would immediately move to stop them. If his body were to end up killing a couple of them in that state...

Zhang Xuan's head was already hurting just from thinking of it.

Anxious, he was considering if he should just try his luck and charge out of the lava. Perhaps, he might be able to return to his body before anyone noticed him. However, in the end, he changed his mind and sent a telepathic message to the Golden Origin Cauldron instead.

Wu shi and Guild Leader Han were Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm experts. With a sweep of their Spiritual Perception, they would immediately notice the peculiar nature of his soul. Given so, the best and safest solution at hand was to have the Golden Origin Cauldron return to the lava.

"Ding Ding, come back!"

"No way, it's too dangerous down there..." The Golden Origin Cauldron shivered in fear.

You must be joking! Just staying down there for a few minutes nearly made my magnificent body shatter into bits. There is no way I am going to be so foolish as to go down once more to commit suicide.

On the other hand, seeing how a weapon cauldron was actually so fearful of death, Zhang Xuan felt so enraged that his lungs could burst from sheer fury.

What the heck is this? There are so many humans here who don't fear death, and yet, a Saint artifact like you ended up being the one who treats your life most precious.

Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

"As long as you come here, I will find a way to raise your cultivation to Leaving Aperture realm!" Left with no choice, Zhang Xuan could only attempt to lure it in with benefits.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron was fearful of death, it did have unquestionable loyalty to him. At times like this, if he could blind its fear with greed, it would be willing to do as he said.

"Leaving Aperture realm? Really?" The Golden Origin Cauldron leaped up in excitement.

There was a significant difference between the Leaving Aperture realm of Saint-tier artifacts and that of humans. While humans gained the ability to draw out their Primordial Spirit and exert overwhelming might, Saint-tier artifacts would have their spirits refined to a level comparable to Primordial Spirits. While its spirit would still be unable to leave its body and travel freely, it would gain the ability to control its form and sprout arms and legs.

Well, the sight of it was indeed rather bizarre and hideous, but nevertheless, it was a huge evolution for Saint-tier artifacts, a step toward them becoming independent beings.

"Don't worry, I always mean what I say!" Zhang Xuan said.

Raising the cultivation of a Saint-tier artifact wasn't easy, but it wasn't entirely impossible. He still had the Black Goldcrystal Ore that he had obtained from the treasure left behind by Wu Yangzi. As long as he could fuse it into the Golden Origin Cauldron's body, he should be able to raise its cultivation further.

However, there were great difficulties in doing so as well. He would have to melt the Black Goldcrystal Ore entirely in order to fuse it perfectly with the Golden Origin Cauldron, but ordinary earth flames weren't capable of doing so. It was unknown if even the lava deeper beneath would be sufficient to do the job.

"Alright then!" Receiving Zhang Xuan's word, the Golden Origin Cauldron dived back

into the lava with a piercing shrill before the other master teachers could surround it.

"This..." Seeing how the Golden Origin Cauldron was moving around boisterously, charging back into the lava right after being blasted out of it a moment ago, they couldn't help but fall into a daze.

Putong!

After the Golden Origin Cauldron entered the lava, Zhang Xuan hurriedly slipped back into his body before flying out of the cauldron to appear before everyone else.

"Zhang shi, are you fine?" the crowd asked worriedly.

"I'm alright!" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "When venturing below earlier, I saw quite a few buildings below. If I am not mistaken, the ancient domain is really right beneath there!"

"How deep is it?" Wu shi asked.

"This..." After a moment of thought, Zhang Xuan replied, "I am not too sure, but I estimate it to be around a hundred meters deep!"

Even though he had only caught a glimpse of it, it wasn't too difficult for him to estimate a distance with his sharp eye of discernment.

"A hundred meters?" The faces of the crowd warped in horror.

Wu shi had nearly died from trying to dive forty meters deep; a hundred meters was clearly an impossible mission for them!

If that was where the ancient domain truly was, then it made no difference to them at all, since there was no way they were going to be able to access it.

"Do you have any idea how we can reach it?" Wu shi asked Guild Leader Han, only to see the latter shaking his head with a bitter smile.

Even he had no way of venturing a hundred meters deep into the ancient domain.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan spoke hesitantly. "I do have an idea in mind..."

"Oh?" Many pairs of eyes immediately gathered on him.

"That lava spurt earlier is extremely powerful. At its full force, it is capable of parting the lava, creating a temporary passageway that we can pass through. That was also how I managed to see the buildings below as well. We could make use of this passageway to slip into the ancient domain!" Zhang Xuan said.

The passageway only opened up for a brief moment, but as long as they made ample preparations beforehand and charged in swiftly, it was entirely possible for them to pass through it!

"It is not a bad idea, but... I fear that it might be unfeasible!"

"Indeed! Just think of how powerful the lava spurt was; even the Golden Origin Cauldron was knocked out of it. To attempt to travel against that overwhelming force... that is an impossible feat!"

Guild Leader Han and Wu shi glanced at one another and shook their heads.

The idea was not bad, possibly the best one they had so far, but it was a pity that it couldn't possibly be executed.

In the face of the powerful surge of energies from beneath, they would already be considered lucky if they weren't torn to shreds from facing it head on. To attempt to travel a distance of a hundred meters against it... that was clearly an impossible feat.

Taking a step back, even if it was possible, it was likely to take up considerable time. If the lava were to cave in on them while they were in the midst of traveling downwards, they would, without the slightest doubt, die there and then.

"You are right in saying that traveling against that burst of energies is nearly impossible... However, what if we were to follow the burst of energies instead?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Follow the burst of energies?" The crowd couldn't comprehend what Zhang Xuan was driving at.

That burst of energies originated from the depths of the lava, and it was headed up toward the seal. How were they supposed to follow the burst of energies down when they were traveling in the opposite direction?

Abruptly coming to a realization, Guild Leader Han asked, "Does Principal Zhang mean to gather the energy from the burst of energies through a unique formation and rebound it downward?"

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Guild Leader Han frowned. "But... that poses its dangers as well. Given how powerful that burst of energies is, if we fail to gather it well, it could very well result in a devastating explosion."

"Gather the energy from the burst of powers through a unique formation?"

"Rebound it downward?"

Hearing the conversation between the two, the crowd finally understood what was going on, and grim expressions surfaced on their faces.

They had witnessed the might of the burst of energies from the lava with their own eyes; it was overwhelmingly powerful. To gather it together and redirect it downward into the lava... it would be fine if they succeeded, but if they failed, considering the volatility of the energies contained within the burst, it could very well lead to a devastating explosion that would kill them on the spot.

"Do you have any other ideas then?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I..." Guild Leader Han froze.

Considering that the lava was at least a hundred meters deep, there was indeed no easy way they could bypass it. The idea proposed by Principal Zhang could very well be the best one they had.

"The seal has already closed, so we can't back out anymore. If we fail to enter the ancient domain, death is the only possible outcome. Since we are already cornered as it is, why don't we take a gamble?" Zhang Xuan said.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

There were no other alternatives; they could only give it a try. They wouldn't last long if they didn't do anything.

"What do we do then?"

Having joined the expedition knowing that they might very well face death, it didn't take long for the group to make up their minds after some discussion. They hurriedly turned their gazes toward Zhang Xuan for instructions.

"Simple. Firstly, I need all of the grade-7 formation flags that you have. After that, pay close attention to my commands and move when I tell you to. We will be entering the Golden Origin Cauldron and charging through the lava pool in it," Zhang Xuan said.

As a Saint-tier artifact, the Golden Origin Cauldron was capable of expanding its size to a certain limit. At its largest, it could easily house thirty men without its insides getting too cramped.

Considering how there was a significant disparity in the flying speed of the expedition members, it would be best for all of them to advance together within the Golden Origin Cauldron instead. Firstly, it would be safer. Secondly, they would be able to travel faster this way as well.

"Alright!" Hearing the arrangements, everyone nodded in agreement.

There were quite a few grade-7 formation flags among the expedition members, especially with Guild Leader Han. All in all, Zhang Xuan gathered roughly five hundred formation flags, and he couldn't help but nod in satisfaction.

It would probably be enough with so many of them.

The most important matter at hand was to find out how he could set up a formation that was capable of gathering and harnessing rampaging energies within it.

Considering the strength of the rampaging energies, the grade of the formation could not be too low. To be safe, the minimum requirement for it was grade-7 pinnacle.

"Guild Leader Han, you are the head of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Formation Master Guild. Do you happen to have any formation books and blueprints on you?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Formation books and blueprints? I do have quite a few of them." Guild Leader Han couldn't help but be taken aback by Zhang Xuan's request.

They were already going to set up the formation, so why was the other party suddenly asking him for books at this moment?

"I need to borrow them for a moment." Then, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and said, "If anyone else has any books regarding formation, pass them over to me as well. The formation that I am going to set up later will determine our life and death, so I dare not take it lightly. Thus, I hope to do some last-minute reading in hopes of heightening the chances of success!"

"Alright!" Knowing the importance of the matter, the other master teachers hurriedly took out all of the books regarding formations that they had on them and passed them over.

As expected of the head of a Formation Master Guild, Han Xu did have a lot of books on him. Just the number of 7-star formation master books that he alone possessed was more than several thousand. Paired with those from the others, there were around ten thousand of them in total.

Zhang Xuan swiftly scanned through the books with his eyes, collecting them into the Library of Heaven's Path and compiling them to form a Heaven's Path Formation Art.

While his consciousness was immersed within the Library of Heaven's Path, trying to take in the vast knowledge contained in the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art, his body was flipping through those books one after another, acting as if he was studying them carefully.

Two hours later, he had finally succeeded in internalizing the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art.

"Alright, I am done studying. You can take back your books now!" Zhang Xuan said.

After which, he closed his eyes and began making calculations. Very soon, a formation surfaced in his mind.

Having studied the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art, it went without saying that his comprehension of formations had reached the level of 7-star pinnacle, perhaps even being on par with some 8-star primary stage formation masters.

With his current proficiency in formations, it wasn't too difficult for him to identify a fitting formation for the geographical terrain he was in.

The best formation to use in this situation is the grade-7 pinnacle Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However... Zhang Xuan frowned. The formation is highly demanding on one's soul. I am unable to set it up with my current strength.

Based on his calculations, the current problem that they were facing could be perfectly resolved by setting up a Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However, there was an issue with that. Due to the complexity of the formation, the soul of the formation master had to have reached a certain level before they could set it up. However, his soul cultivation was only at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan at the moment, a long way off from being able to set up the formation.

I won't be able to set up the formation, unless... I can advance my soul cultivation further.

Chapter 1033

The Appearance of the Ancient Domain

His soul cultivation was only at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan at the moment. Being a soul oracle, his soul was indeed significantly stronger than most Saint realm cultivators, but it was still far too weak from being able to set up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation.

As a grade-7 pinnacle formation, it was designed with the capabilities of a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm expert in mind. While Zhang Xuan's soul possessed similar capabilities with a Primordial Spirit, it was a pity that his soul was still too weak at the moment.

Unless... he could raise the cultivation of his soul!

Of course, there was Guild Leader Han around, and there was no doubt that he did possess a sufficiently strong soul to set up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However, the situation was a little different here.

The formation flags had to be planted near the lava, but this meant that the formation flags would be at risk of melting. As such, the formation had to be set up swiftly just a few moments before the burst of energies. On top of that, the activation of the formation also had to be spot-on, with only just a single second of error allowed. These two feats were something that Guild Leader Han was incapable of.

Furthermore, Zhang Xuan would only have perfect control over the formation if he were to set it up himself. If the slightest error occurred, the burst of energies could end up missing the ancient domain, thus causing his efforts to end in vain. Perhaps, they might even lose their lives due to it.

Zhang Xuan looked at the crowd and said, "I have already thought of how it could be set up, but I need to make some preparations. I will be entering the lava with Ding Ding to calculate the positioning of the flags. I might end up staying down there for quite some time, but I won't be in any danger, so there's no need to worry!"

He was intending to enter the lava to cultivate his soul, so it was likely that it would

take a fair bit of time. Thus, there was a need for him to inform them in advance lest they dive down to look for him out of worry. That could end up being troublesome for him.

The crowd nodded.

After some discussion, Zhang Xuan's body entered the Golden Origin Cauldron once more, and the latter plopped forcefully into the lava.

The area that was chosen this time around was some distance away from the area where the burst of energies was triggered, so they wouldn't be in any danger.

Just like the before, the Golden Origin Cauldron stopped at around the ten-meter mark to hide from the Spiritual Perception of others. Right after all preparations were done, he was just about to draw out his soul when a thought flashed across his mind.

Hu!

An identical figure appeared in the cauldron.

His clone!

This place had the unique ability of refining one's soul, so it was a good opportunity to his clone to raise his strength as well.

After communicating for a bit, the clone also learned about the current situation, and his eyes lit up in excitement.

Huala!

His clone drew out his soul as well and said, "I will be going down to take a look!"

After saying those words, he dived down into the lava right away.

Seeing how swiftly that fellow ran away, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. He quickly dived down into the lava with his soul as well.

With his previous experience, he headed all the way down.

Twenty meters, thirty meters, forty meters...

In the blink of an eye, he reached the fifty-meter mark.

The higher the temperature, the greater the refining effect on one's soul. While the heat was rather unbearable for his soul at the fifty-meter mark, it allowed his soul to grow at the fastest rate possible as well.

Where's my clone? Coming to a halt, Zhang Xuan was just about to begin cultivating when he suddenly realized that the fellow who had left ahead of him was nowhere to be seen.

He quickly took a look around him, and only then did he realize that the other party had dived right down to the sixty-meter mark and was currently cultivating with his eyes tightly shut.

The searing heat in the surroundings flowed into the other party's soul, refining it further, resulting in his aura growing stronger and stronger.

He was actually able to reach the sixty-meter mark? Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

The soul of his clone had come from the same source as him. Despite using his full strength, he was only barely able to reach the fifty-meter marks. On the other hand, his clone was actually able to reach sixty meters.

Treating Wei Ruyan has depleted a fair portion of my soul essence, and the deposition of a fragment of my soul into the Mausoleum Tablet resulted in significant depletion as well. That fellow has been a little stronger than me from the start, and those incidents have only served to widen the gap between us. Soon, Zhang Xuan managed to make sense out of the situation, and he couldn't help but sigh gloomily.

While he had recovered from those depletions eventually, his soul didn't manage to return to the wholesome state it had been before.

It was due to this that his clone's soul was able to progress way further than him.

Staring at his clone, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a heavy pressure on his shoulders. No, this won't do. I have to hurry up and cultivate. Otherwise, how embarrassing it will be if I can't even match up to my clone?

While the others were busy dominating their clones, he was being dominated by his

clone. This was unacceptable!

Closing his eyes, Zhang Xuan focused his attention on driving his Heaven's Path Soul Art, and the heat from the surroundings began to flow into his body. The searing heat gradually tempered his slowly dissipating soul, making it more condensed and powerful.

Gugugu!

Previously, in the Subterranean Gallery, Zhang Xuan had already gathered the soul cultivation techniques of many Otherworldly Demons to compile the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art, allowing his soul energy to reach 34,000,000 ding.

Under the refinement of the intense heat, his soul, which was larger than ten meters, was gradually being compressed, but the might it wielded was rising swiftly.

35,000,000 ding!

36,000,000 ding!

37,000,000 ding!

...

As time passed, the rate at which his strength rose increased faster and faster, and his aura was growing more powerful and heavier as well.

Kacha!

After some period of time, his soul finally broke through its limit and advanced from Transcendent Mortal 9-dan to Half-Saint.

I made a breakthrough? Zhang Xuan was astonished.

As he hadn't compiled the Half-Saint Heaven's Path Soul Art yet, he had thought that it should be impossible for him to achieve a breakthrough. Yet, who would have thought that he would be able to do it through the sheer heat of the lava?

It seemed like gauging the strength of a soul by its size wasn't the way to go. What was

more important was to refine it. The higher the purity of one's soul, the more nimble and powerful it would be.

In a sense, this was similar to zhenqi as well.

After achieving a breakthrough, Zhang Xuan felt refreshed. Lowering his head to take a look, he noticed that his clone had already achieved a breakthrough. Furthermore, from the looks of it, it seemed like the other party had even reached Half-Saint intermediate stage.

Humph! Gritting his teeth, Zhang Xuan began flying over to the sixty-meter mark.

Previously, when he attempted to head toward the sixty-meter mark, he had felt a powerful strain on his soul, as if it would be torn apart at any moment. However, with the refinement of his soul, his soul had become far more durable than before, allowing it to withstand the intense heat easily.

Continue! Knowing that the only way he could catch up with his clone was to be strict with himself, Zhang Xuan didn't stop at just the sixty-meter mark. Instead, he proceeded on to the seventy-meter mark.

Upon reaching the seventy-meter mark, he felt his soul quivering once more as a powerful force threatened to rip his soul apart. Not daring to advance any further, Zhang Xuan sat down and continued refining his soul.

With the enhanced rate of refinement due to the stronger heat from the surroundings, Zhang Xuan was growing stronger at a rapid rate.

At the same time, his soul managed to compress down to ten meters.

If I can compress my soul below ten meters, my strength will surely be enhanced significantly.

The ten-meter mark was a significant demarcation point for a soul. Back then, he had accidentally crushed the Huanyu Empire's Cleansing Lake in an attempt to break through that bottleneck.

If he could use the heat to compress his soul below ten meters at this point, not only would it become easier for him to slip back into his body, his strength would also be boosted significantly.

As the searing heat circulated through his soul to refine it, Zhang Xuan felt as if someone had placed him amid the inferno of hell. The excruciating pain that he was suffering at the moment was so unbearable that he felt as if he could pass out at any moment.

However, clenching his jaws, he forced himself to hold on. Some time later, a loud buzz sounded from his soul.

His soul had been compressed back below ten meters, and his cultivation had also reached Half-Saint intermediate stage.

I succeeded!

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. He instinctively turned his gaze upward to take a look, but he realized that his clone wasn't there. Thus, he turned his gaze downward, and he realized that the other party, at some point, had overtaken him and arrived at the eighty-meter mark. The other party's eyes were closed, deep in cultivation. The size of his soul was only at nine meters, an indication that he had reached Half-Saint advanced stage.

That fellow...

Not expect his clone to be even faster than him, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little anxious. He hurriedly dived further down as well.

Having compressed his soul back within the ten-meter mark, he was able to pass through the eighty-meter mark without any trouble.

Advancing ahead, Zhang Xuan went straight to the ninety-meter mark before he stopped to cultivate. This time, the rate at which his soul was being refined was extremely fast. Within just ten minutes, his soul had already been compressed down to nine meters as well. Knowing that his clone was bound to be faster than him, Zhang Xuan didn't bother sneaking the other party a glance anymore. Instead, he chose to focus all of his attention on his cultivation and continued on. Twenty minutes later, his soul reached eight meters, and his soul cultivation also reached Half-Saint pinnacle, ready to achieve a breakthrough at any moment.

At his current level, the heat at the ninety-meter mark was no longer sufficient for him. Thus, he dived further down, and as he had expected, his clone was already at the hundred-meter mark.

At this moment, the other party's cultivation was also at the same level as his, Half-Saint pinnacle. However, instead of cultivating, the other party was gazing downward, seemingly assessing something.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan headed up to his clone's side and looked down as well. What he saw left him slightly stunned.

There was no lava beneath the hundred-meter mark. Instead, there was a massive barrier with innumerable buildings constructed within it, similar to what Zhang Xuan had seen earlier.

Is this the ancient domain? It is indeed below the lava! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He had only gotten a glimpse of it earlier, so he had not been able to confirm whether what he had seen was only a mirage or not. However, with this, the doubts that he had been harboring before had finally been entirely dispelled.

The ancient domain they were looking for was indeed at the bottom of the lava.

But... given how deeply hidden this place was, how in the world did the old principal and the others manage to get in back then?

Zhang Xuan touched the barrier, and it felt extremely sturdy, just like the white mist barrier of the seal above. In its unopened state, it was impossible for him to break through it.

Floating along the seal, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows suddenly shot up in alarm.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe...

Within the seal, there were several Otherworldly Demons that were advancing alongside the buildings. Naturally, they were unable to sense the two souls spying on them from beyond the barrier.

These Otherworldly Demons each possessed a cultivation of Saint 1-dan, and the killing intent that they exuded was strong enough to leave any man petrified in fear.

What are they up to? Zhang Xuan frowned.

In order to reach the bottom of the lava, their group had to go through so much trouble, constructing the Great Heaven Reversal Formation to redirect the force of the burst of energies back downwards, in order to pass through the lava. Yet, this bunch of Saint 1-dan Otherworldly Demons had actually been able to enter the ancient domain? How?

And what were they up to?

After making a few turns, the Otherworldly Demons soon arrived at a relatively small square in the midst of all of the buildings.

At the center of the square was a square altar with a massive closed door on top. There was an exceptionally sturdy seal, driven by some kind of power, cast over the entire structure. Dozens of Otherworldly Demons were scattered around the structure, attempting to break open the seal.

Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the door at the center, and he immediately felt a devastatingly powerful heat being emanated from the depths of the door. Even in his current state, he could very well be reduced to cinders if he were to attempt to go close to it.

What pure energy! Could it be that the lava in the surroundings was caused by the heat emanated from the door?

Due to the extraordinary heat of the lava, their group had been thinking that the lava was linked straight to an earth core, where the Earth Core Lava could be found. However, from the looks of it, their deduction was wrong. Most likely, the hundred meters of lava was likely the product of that door!

Hualala!

While Zhang Xuan was still taken aback by this shocking discovery, a towering Otherworldly Demon that possessed an astounding cultivation of Saint 4-dan suddenly walked into the square. At his command, the surrounding Otherworldly Demons roared furiously and began launching a powerful wave of attacks on the seal.

Hong long!

A brilliant glow shone from the door, and a powerful burst of energies blasted up. At the same time, the seal grew slightly thinner.

That burst of energies... Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

That was the very same burst of energies that had left them deeply troubled but they were planning to make use of!

Chapter 1034

Crushed to Death

To think that the devastating might that threatened to decimate everything within a radius of thousand kilometers would have originated from there!

Who would have thought that it was a result of the Otherworldly Demons' attempt to break the seal?

It was no wonder the burst of energies abruptly started acting up a few days ago. Most likely, those fellows had been trying to break the seal since then.

He recalled what he had heard from Mu shi and Wu shi, about how a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan master teacher keeping watch over the area noticed an Otherworldly Demon loitering around the seal.

That matter had left Zhang Xuan perplexed for some time, but upon seeing this sight, everything suddenly came together like pieces of a puzzle.

Most likely, the Otherworldly Demons knew that their attempts to break the seal would result in the accumulation of energies within the area, and naturally, if an explosion were to occur as a result of it, they would be the first ones to be annihilated, standing at the very center of the blast. Thus, they intentionally let out news to the local Master Teacher Pavilion regarding their activities in the area before continuing their attacks.

Naturally, when the local Master Teacher Pavilion learned about the problems occurring with the seal, they would have no choice but to step in and intervene. While their efforts did save countless lives living in the area, it would be doing the Otherworldly Demons a huge favor as well.

This also explained why the interval between each burst of energies was irregular as well.

To break the seal, the Otherworldly Demons were launching their attacks in waves, taking a short breather in between so as to recover their strength. Naturally, the short

breather that they took couldn't possibly be exactly the same each time around.

If that's the case, it means that the Otherworldly Demons have a way to effectively communicate with their fellow brethren remotely, Zhang Xuan analyzed grimly.

If that was truly the case, their expedition to the ancient domain would be more dangerous than ever.

The Otherworldly Demons that were attempting to enter the ancient domain at the moment might have been able to liaise with those who had entered two years ago, along with the old principal. That would mean that the other party commanded greater intelligence regarding the ancient domain than their expedition team.

After taking a look, Zhang Xuan finally understood what was going on, and a bitter smile surfaced on his lips. If the Otherworldly Demons hadn't attacked the seal, the heat emanated by the door would have gradually accumulated, and eventually, it would have grown too powerful and induced an energy storm that would part the lava above it, creating a natural passageway straight into the ancient domain. It is likely that the old principal made use of this energy storm to enter the ancient domain.

In the end, the reason they weren't unable to find the ancient domain wasn't because they had found the wrong place but due to his formation flag releasing all of the energies accumulated within the seal! If he hadn't made a move a few days ago, the Otherworldly Demons might very well have stopped their attacks due to fears that they would die from the explosion.

When the seal eventually opened, they would have been able to enter the ancient domain with ease through the energy storm. They would have been spared a great deal of trouble.

What the heck was with that!

Forget it, I should return to set up the formation now.

Having made sense out of what was happening, there was no point in Zhang Xuan remaining there. Thus, he beckoned to his clone before diving back up to where the Golden Origin Cauldron was.

It had been roughly been four hours since he had entered the lava to cultivate, and the others were likely worried sick about him by now.

This time, his clone was extremely obedient, not causing any trouble at all. After returning his clone to the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan had the Golden Origin Cauldron surface.

Just as Zhang Xuan had guessed, the master teachers and combat masters outside were indeed very worried about him. His emergence from the lava left all of them heaving huge sighs of relief simultaneously.

Zhang Xuan scanned the crowd and said, "I am finally done scanning the geographical terrain below, so it is time to start setting up the formation. Everyone, prepare yourselves! Enter Ding Ding and await my command. Once we succeed, we will set forth immediately!"

Knowing how important the matter was, the crowd nodded grimly. "Alright!"

Hu!

With a loud bellow, the Golden Origin Cauldron expanded itself to tenfold its previous size, around twenty meters wide. The crowd hurriedly got within it.

Instead of entering the Golden Origin Cauldron like the others, Luo Ruoxin headed toward Zhang Xuan and said, "I won't be going in; I will accompany you outside."

"It will be safer for you to get into Ding Ding. I fear that you might meet with danger following behind me." Zhang Xuan frowned.

If something happened, at least the Golden Origin Cauldron could bear the brunt of the blow. If Luo Ruoxin remained outside, she would be potentially exposing herself to grave danger. Furthermore, if she couldn't keep up with the group and the lava caved in on her...

"Don't worry, I still have a couple of life preservation means up my sleeves," Luo Ruoxin said with a light smile.

"...Alright then." Seeing how confident Luo Ruoxin was and recalling how she could very well be an offspring of the Luo Clan, one of the Sage Clans, Zhang Xuan relented.

"Ding Ding, listen to my command. When I order you to set forth, you are to move immediately. There mustn't be the slightest bit of hesitation from you!" Zhang Xuan turned around to command the Golden Origin Cauldron before flying up to the area

right above where the burst of energies was headed towards.

It had already been around eight minutes since the last burst of energies, so the next one was due soon.

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out more than a hundred formation flags, and they floated right before him. Activating his Eye of Insight, he stared intently at the lava beneath him, waiting for the right moment to move.

Boom!

A moment later, the lava beneath began to flurry. A sharp glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes as he flicked his wrist, and the formation flags swiftly flew down into their respective positions.

"Activate!" While standing in midair, Zhang Xuan stomped his feet, and powerful gusts of air spread into the surroundings like water ripples.

Weng!

A massive formation instantaneously came to life.

Hu!

The moment that the formation was activated, the lava beneath finally couldn't house the burst of energies anymore. As if a scissors tearing across a piece of silk, a massive rip appeared in the lava as the burst of energies headed right toward the massive formation.

Hong long long!

The instant that the burst of energies collided with the formation, it was absorbed and accumulated within the formation.

The Great Heaven Reversal Formation, when used in battle, had the effect of blocking the opponent's attack and returning it back at the latter. When utilized well, it could return the attack back at one's opponent without any loss of energy.

In other words, on top of being a defensive formation, the Great Heaven Reversal Formation had offensive means as well.

Of course, that was easier said than done, and the formation had its limits, too. For one, if the absorbed energy was beyond the durability of the formation, the person who set up the formation could very well suffer strong backlash and possibly die on the spot.

Seeing how the absorption of the power contained in the burst of energies hadn't resulted in the shattering of the Great Heaven Reversal Formation, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he wiped away the cold sweat on his forehead.

In truth, he had not been too sure if the formation would be able to withstand the immense might contained in the burst of energies either. It was fortunate that he had learned the 7-star Heaven's Path Formation Art earlier. Otherwise, even if it was Guild Leader Han setting up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation, the imperfections in setting it up could have resulted in the other party's formation being unable to withstand the violent burst of energies.

Worried, the crowd in the Golden Origin Cauldron had been keeping an eye on the situation outside with their Spiritual Perception, and upon seeing this sight, Guild Leader Han couldn't help but narrow his eyes in shock. Principal Zhang sure has a deep understanding of formations!

His initial plan had been to have Zhang Xuan hide within the Golden Origin Cauldron while he set up the Great Heaven Reversal Formation. However, upon seeing this sight, he felt relieved that he had decided to go with Zhang Xuan's call instead. If he had obstinately chosen to take on the task himself, not only would the expedition team have failed to get into the ancient domain, he could very well have died from the backlash as well.

Even though the Great Heaven Reversal Formation was a grade-7 pinnacle formation, the other party had managed to set it up so perfectly that it harnessed prowess on par with a grade-8 formation. There was not the slightest flaw that he could see in it—not only was it perfectly harmonized with his surroundings, it was even further reinforced by the heat of the lava beneath, granting it unimaginable prowess.

Amidst his shock, the burst of energies finally calmed down, and the formation was done charging up as well. Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up as he flicked out a formation flag, and he tossed it forward powerfully.

Tzzzz la!

Just like how he dealt with the huge accumulation of energies within the seal a few days ago, the formation flag struck an opening of the Great Heaven Reversal Formation, and an inconceivably massive burst of might blasted forth along the formation flag.

BOOM!

Under the incredible might of the blast, a huge opening was ripped through the lava.

" Go! " Knowing that this was their chance to head through, Zhang Xuan bellowed loudly, and the Golden Origin Cauldron hurriedly dashed into the opening.

Zhang Xuan swiftly shot a glance at Luo Ruoxin before dashing into the opening as well.

Knowing that the passageway through the lava would only remain open for a brief moment before closing in on them, he executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art and darted forth at the fastest speed possible.

Over the past few months, he had been trying to merge the Heaven's Path Movement Art together with the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, and just a few days ago, he had finally managed to do so perfectly. With the strengths of the two techniques merged together, Zhang Xuan was able to move as swift as a streak of lightning, allowing him to keep up even with the Saint 4-dan pinnacle Golden Origin Cauldron.

Luo shi... Fearing that Luo Ruoxin might have been unable to catch up, Zhang Xuan turned around to take a look, only to see her only around three to four meters behind him. No matter how fast he traveled, the distance between them didn't seem to lengthen at all.

As expected of an offspring of a Sage Clan, her speed sure is fearsome! Zhang Xuan nodded in awe.

Honestly speaking, even up to this point, he was still unable to discern how powerful the young lady behind him was. Nevertheless, considering how the other party was able to keep up with his Heaven's Path Movement Art—and judging from her leisurely look, it seemed like she wasn't anywhere close to exerting her full strength yet—there was no doubt that she was an expert.

Boom!

The Golden Origin Cauldron and Zhang Xuan passed through the hundred meters of lava in the blink of an eye. With a resounding crash, they landed in the ancient domain.

"Everyone, hurry out! There are Otherworldly Demons in the area, so be careful!" Zhang Xuan roared deafeningly as he quickly took his stance in front of Luo Ruoxin.

Based on what he had seen earlier, there were dozens of Otherworldly Demons in the area. While most of them were only at Saint 1-dan, there were quite a number of them around, so it was still imperative that they remained careful.

If the Otherworldly Demons were to attempt to launch an assault on them at this moment, their unprepared expedition team could potentially suffer quite a few casualties.

"Otherworldly Demons?"

The crowd hurriedly flew out of the Golden Origin Cauldron and swiftly put up a defensive formation, assessing their surroundings warily. However, with a look, they couldn't help but fall into a daze.

Wu shi looked at Zhang Xuan with a doubtful look on his face. "Principal Zhang, is this the ancient domain you spoke of? Shouldn't it be filled with buildings? Why is it... all rubble?"

"Rubble?" Zhang Xuan was surprised by the question.

He quickly took a look at his surroundings as well, and just as the other party had said, the exquisite buildings that he had seen just a moment ago had collapsed into rubble. Huge puffs of white smoke were rising from them, indicating that they had just fallen a moment ago.

"Could it be that... the Otherworldly Demons knew that we were coming, so they decisively chose to destroy the ancient domain in advance?" Zhang Xuan remarked.

"Cough cough..." Seeing Zhang Xuan's incensed look, Guild Leader Han said awkwardly, "They weren't the ones who destroyed it. Rather... it seems like the impact of the rebounded burst of energies was too great, to the extent that it not only tore the lava apart but jolted the ancient domain into the current state it is in as well."

The rebounded blast generated by the Great Heaven Reversal Formation was so great

that it had ended up devastating the ancient domain as well.

"I was the one who did it?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched in embarrassment. He had been praising his clone a moment ago for not causing any trouble this time around, but who would have thought that he would end up causing trouble instead?

What the heck was this?

"Right, where are the Otherworldly Demons? Did they flee?" Embarrassed, Zhang Xuan hurriedly changed the topic. Recalling those fellows that he had seen earlier, he quickly scanned his surroundings, but in that moment, a sheepish voice sounded in the air.

"Master, I think that... I might have accidentally... crushed them."

Chapter 1035

Cinque Sun Branch

"Crushed them?"

Shocked, Zhang Xuan hurriedly looked beneath the Golden Origin Cauldron, and there, he saw a pile of flattened Otherworldly Demons.

Most of them were at Saint 1-dan, but there was a slightly larger figure who had reached Saint 4-dan. Nevertheless, unable to stand being crushed by the Golden Origin Cauldron, he was still reduced into meat paste. His entire body was plastered strongly to the ground, unable to torn off it.

Seeing that the Golden Origin Cauldron was still lying comfortably on a pile of carcasses, Zhang Xuan commanded impatiently, "Hurry up and move away!"

"Yes!" The Golden Origin Cauldron hurriedly leaped away.

Zhang Xuan began tabulating the number of carcasses in the area, and it tallied with the number of Otherworldly Demons he had seen earlier in his soul form.

Those fellows probably couldn't have imagined that the burst of energies would suddenly be rebounded on them, severely injuring them. After which, before they even attempted to escape, an enormous Golden Origin Cauldron fell upon them, crushing them to their deaths. In a sense, their deaths were quite tragic.

Well, at least they died quickly, so they didn't suffer too much.

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress. I was intending to capture one of them to find out how they managed to enter the ancient domain, and what that door over there is, but this... How am I to interrogate them now?

Not only did the rebounded blast from the formation destroy the entire ancient domain, the Golden Origin Cauldron had even crushed all of the Otherworldly Demons to death. Without any intelligence to work with, how were they supposed to advance?

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message into the Myriad Anthive Nest. "Violetleaf King, do you recognize this fellow?"

The Violetleaf King swiftly swept the surroundings with his Spiritual Perception before responding. "Young Master, I am not too sure about those Saint 1-dan peons, but that Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon is one of the Upper Five Kings, the Fireleaf King!"

"Fireleaf King?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

To think that the esteemed Fireleaf King of the Five Upper Kings would end up being crushed to death like cannon fodder, not even given the chance to speak a line at all. Wasn't this a little too pitiful for him?

"Indeed. The Fireleaf King has the ability to control heat and flames. In an environment such as this, he would have been able to display prowess far beyond that of a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert. How did you manage to kill him?" the Violetleaf King asked in surprise.

The Upper Kings were not only strong, each of them also possessed their own unique secret art. For the young master to have killed one of them and yet be unaware of his identity... the Fireleaf King sure was pitiful.

Thinking about it, it seemed like the young master had already defeated six of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage so far. He really was the nemesis of the Qingtian Emperor.

"Ah, it was an accident..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Since the other party was already dead, there was no point thinking too much into it. With a grasp, Zhang Xuan took the storage rings of the Otherworldly Demons and scanned through their contents carefully. However, there was no useful information to be found. Thus, he turned to the crowd and said, "The buildings might have collapsed, but there might still be useful items lying around. Let's try combing the area and see if we can find anything."

While the place had been mostly reduced to rubble, there were still some parts of it that were intact and discernible. If the old principal and the others had been here before, they might be able to find clues on them.

"Un." The crowd nodded before scattering into the area.

Seeing that Luo Ruoxin was standing still on the spot, Zhang Xuan turned to her curiously and asked, "You aren't going to look around?"

"If there is anything of use, the Otherworldly Demons will have long found and taken it!" Luo Ruoxin shook her head and said, "Since all of the Otherworldly Demons were gathered here when they were killed, there is no doubt that there is something amiss with the door. We might not have even entered the real ancient domain at all."

"This..." Zhang Xuan was taken aback before nodding in awe.

As expected of an expert from a Sage Clan, her eye of discernment was indeed extraordinary!

If they were already in the ancient domain, the Otherworldly Demons wouldn't have been wasting their effort trying to destroy the seal on the door. Besides, even if there were some treasures of the ancient domain lying around the area, the Otherworldly Demons would have long swiped them clean and stored them in their storage rings.

They couldn't possibly have left them behind for others to take.

As expected, it didn't take long for the others to return empty-handed.

Wu shi walked up and said, "The ancient domain is constructed within a cavern, and it is only roughly several hundred meters wide. We have searched around the area, but there is nothing at all. Should we try searching once more?"

After four hours of recuperation, he had already recovered to his peak condition. He could easily get a clear picture of the entire ancient domain by scanning it with his Spiritual Perception, and if there was anything to be found, he would have surely found it regardless of whether it was hidden beneath the rubble or not.

Waving his hand, Zhang Xuan said, "I see. There should be no need to search any further. If I am not mistaken, the secret should lie in this door over here!"

Hearing those words, the crowd turned their attention toward the door.

The door wasn't too large, roughly five meters tall and wide. It was covered by a seal, and from time to time, it would emanate a fearsome heat, making it difficult for anyone

to approach it.

"Back when we charged through the lava, I noticed that the Otherworldly Demons had been attacking the seal, seemingly trying to open it," Zhang Xuan explained.

He couldn't say that he had seen it with his soul, so he could only justify it by saying that in such a way.

"Attacking the seal?" Wu shi repeated with a frown. Raising his palm, he stepped forward and struck the seal.

"Don't!" Noting Wu shi's action, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt his hair stand on end. He hurriedly yelled for the other party to stop, but it was already too late. Thus, he could only quickly bellow, "Everyone, get back!"

After saying those words, he anxiously retreated from the door.

Noticing the peculiar state that Zhang Xuan was in, the crowd quickly backed away as well. Not long later, the seal emanated a brilliant light, and a powerful burst of energies blasted upward, tearing through the layer of lava above them.

However, not too long later, the powerful burst of energies abruptly returned, striking the area where they had been standing a moment before.

The flattened carcasses lying on the ground were knocked into the air forcefully like rubber balls, and under the ravaging might of the burst of energies, their bodies were torn to shreds, inducing a rain of flesh and blood in the area.

"This..." Upon seeing this sight, everyone couldn't help but wipe the cold sweat off their forehead. This was especially so for Wu shi.

Had Principal Zhang not reacted swiftly and instructed the others to back away, the weaker members of their expedition could very well have suffered grievous wounds from the earlier shockwave.

He had thought that it was just an ordinary seal, but who would have thought that it would induce such a powerful burst of energies?

More importantly... there was still the Great Heaven Reversal Formation that Principal Zhang had set up previously. Any energy that they released from below would be

returned back to them at full might. Just the thought of it was sufficient to send shudders down their spines.

"Not only is the seal sturdy, we will even have a rebound from the burst of energies each time we attempt to attack it. How are we supposed to break the seal like that?"

The crowd warily returned back to the door before staring at one another hesitantly, unsure of what they should do.

There was nothing else in the area, and the only thing they had was the door. If the place they were currently in wasn't the ancient domain, it was very likely that the door was the entrance to the ancient domain! But... given that they weren't able to shake the seal in the slightest, how should they proceed?

If they were to strike it, it would generate a burst of energies that would eventually rebound back onto them. In a sense, the current situation they were in was even harder to resolve than the one before.

"Those Otherworldly Demons were here for some time, but they were still unable to find an alternative solution to the problem. It won't be easy for us to do so either."

"Considering the rate at which the seal dissipates with each strike, it will at least take several days of effort to break it open."

Just thinking how they would have to face a few days of rebounds from the burst of energies left the entire expedition team trembling in fear.

After a moment of discussion, the expedition team was still unable to find a solution to the problem. Thus, Guild Leader Han turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Principal Zhang, do you have an idea in mind?"

After everything that they had been through, everyone had deep respect and admiration for the young principal. Even Guild Leader Han had no choice but to admit that the other party was far more knowledgeable and wiser than him.

Zhang Xuan frowned. "Allow me to contemplate for a while."

Under normal circumstances, as long as he could approach the door and touch the seal, he could resolve the problem easily. However... the heat that was emanating from the door was simply too great, such that he couldn't hope to get close to it with his

current strength!

The seal was currently inactive, and Wu shi's earlier strike hadn't activated it either, only jolting it. As such, he was unable to compile a book on it.

At the same time, his Eye of Insight wasn't strong enough to see through the door either.

Let me see if I can get close to the door. Clenching his jaws, Zhang Xuan tried to walk over.

As long as he could do it, he would surely be able to find the flaws of the seal through the Library of Heaven's Path and resolve it.

Driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi as he proceeded forward, Zhang Xuan still felt searing heat assaulting him relentlessly, causing sweat to rain down his forehead.

Hu!

Eventually, he came to a halt. Lifting his gaze, he found that he was still twenty meters away from reaching the door. There was no way he could touch it from that distance.

Even though he had refined his soul earlier, it had done nothing to enhance his zhenqi and the resilience of his physical body, so his body's ability to fend off heat was still the same as ever.

My physical body is still a little too weak. If only I could cultivate it now and strengthen it. Zhang Xuan sighed.

It was indeed possible for his soul to touch the door, but putting aside the fact that he could not do so in front of so many people, he wouldn't be able to compile a book through the touch of his soul either.

His zhenqi cultivation was already at Nascent Saint pinnacle, and he needed the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence to achieve a breakthrough. Thus, the only way out was to find a way to enhance his physical body so that he could quickly touch the door and compile a book on the seal.

With such thought in mind, Zhang Xuan returned to the crowd and asked, "Does anyone here have a Cinque Sun Branch?"

"Cinque Sun Branch? Are you referring to a branch of the Cinque Sun Tree that only survives in extremely arid climates?" Wu shi frowned.

The Cinque Sun Tree was an exceedingly rare plant that only lived in areas rich in earth flames. It needed to be exposed to sunlight for long hours each day, and if it came into contact with the slightest bit of rainwater, it would immediately combust and turn to ash.

Due to this bizarre property, Cinque Sun Branches were even rarer than Saint artifacts.

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

A Cinque Sun Branch was the final artifact required to cultivating the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body. As long as he could find one and absorb the aura of the sun sealed within it, he would be able to finally achieve Consummation 1 in this physical body cultivation technique!

It might only have been a single stage of difference between the Fourth Incandescence and the Fifth Incandescence, but it signified the difference between Major Accomplishment and Consummation. Upon reaching this stage, the five incandescences would finally form a complete system within the body, creating a cyclical relationship, thus enhancing the prowess that one's physical body could exert manyfold.

Upon reaching this level, one would be able to crush Saint 2-dan experts such as the Byzantium Helios Beast with just the sheer prowess of one's physical body.

"The Cinque Sun Branch is an extremely rare medicinal herb, but I have to say that you are really lucky. Just a few days ago, when I was looking through the market of Firesource City, I happened to find one and bought it. This should be it, right?" With a chuckle, Guild Leader Han flicked his wrist and passed over a wooden branch that was almost as thick as an arm.

The area around Firesource City happened to have the climate suited for Cinque Sun Trees to grow, so it would pop up in the market from time to time. Guild Leader Han happened to spot one while loitering around the market, and thinking that he could resell it elsewhere and earn a huge profit, he had decided to buy it.

Chapter 1036

Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, Fifth Incandescence

"Indeed, that's it!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

The wooden branch in the other party's hand wasn't too large, but reminiscent of charcoal, it emanated intense heat.

There was no doubt about it; it was a Cinque Sun Branch!

He had casually asked for it, but who knew that Guild Leader Han would really have one in his possession, and such a large one at that? It was definitely enough for him to cultivate the Fifth Incandescence!

"How much does it cost? I will buy it from you!" Zhang Xuan asked as he took it.

When he took the formation flags from the others earlier to help everyone pass through the lava, it could be considered to have been a public matter with everyone's interests at stake, so it was fine for him to not pay for it.

This time around, however, he was intending to use the Cinque Sun Branch to cultivate the Fifth Incandescence of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body and raise the prowess of his physical body. This was a private matter, and thus, it was only right for him to pay for it.

"This... We are venturing into the dangerous ancient domain together, and it is only right for us to help one another. How can I charge you for this?" Guild Leader Han shook his head.

As valuable as the Cinque Sun Branch was, it was only a material possession. Other than to sell it for a couple of spirit stones, it was of no use to him.

If the other party could use it to break the seal on the door and bring them into the real ancient domain, he could consider the item to have been put to good use.

"Those are two different matters and should be kept separate. If you don't accept my payment, I won't be able to accept the Cinque Sun Branch at ease." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"This..." Knowing that master teachers were obstinate about their own values, Guild Leader Han knew that it would be improper for him to insist on the matter. Thus, he could only shake his head with a bitter smile and say, "I bought the branch at two hundred high-tier spirit stones, so I will sell it to you at the same price as well."

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded and passed two hundred high-tier spirit stones over.

With the profits from the sales of the Cloudmist Flowers and the fortune he had procured from emptying out the storage rings of the Otherworldly Demon Kings that he had subdued thus far, he had more than ten thousand high-tier spirit stones with him at the moment. This bit of money was nothing to him.

Guild Leader Han accepted the spirit stones with a helpless expression on his face, but his admiration for the young man couldn't help but deepen.

Putting aside Zhang Xuan's incredible knowledge on formations despite his young age, his self-discipline was truly admirable. He had a clear idea of what should be done and what should not be done, and he didn't allow greed to blind him.

A principled person like him was a true blessing to mankind, and there was no doubt that he would eventually go on to achieve great things in the world.

The other master teachers nodded in approval at that sight.

The young man before them was truly the embodiment of the word 'upright'.

It was no wonder he had become the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy at such a young age whereas they had still been humble nobodies at his age. Just the thought of it left them reddening in embarrassment.

This was especially so for Liu Mo 1. If only there was a hole in the ground, he would have dived in without the slightest hesitation.

Back when he first met the young man, he had thought that the other party was too arrogant, and he had even berated the other party for it. Yet, not only did the other party manage to resolve the problem with the seal, the other party was even the one

who led them through the lava.

His capability was truly something that Liu Mo could never hope to match up with.

If the other party was the brilliant moon in the sky, Liu Mo was the humble dirt on the ground; that was the vast, unbridgeable distance between them.

"I am going to cultivate using the Cinque Sun Branch now, so please do make use of this time to rest and recuperate. The seal could very well be the path to the ancient domain, and it is unknown what kind of peril we will face there. To heighten our chances of survival, we should ensure that we are in our peak state so that we are ready to face any dangers that come our way," Zhang Xuan said.

The crowd nodded.

After which, Zhang Xuan headed to a quiet corner of the rubble and sat down. Holding the freshly obtained Cinque Sun Branch in his hands, he drove his zhenqi and began cultivating.

Boom!

The energy within the branch flowed through his meridians and nourished every single cell, inducing a qualitative evolution in his body.

The Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body served to strengthen the vitals of one's body and, through doing so, enhance the strength that one was able to exert.

Having patched up the flaws of the Quintuple Incandescence Body, it had become a Heaven's Path cultivation technique. Naturally, he was able to cultivate the Fifth Incandescence swiftly without any problems.

The immense energy flowing through his meridians stimulated his entire body, such that even his blood began to metamorphose as well.

Two hours later...

A resounding echo sounded from his body as the five incandescence in his heart, lungs, spleen, liver, and kidneys came together to form a smooth cyclical flow. A brilliant light shone from Zhang Xuan's body, and in that instant, it felt as if his body had become indestructible.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan's physical appearance changed slightly as well. His height grew slightly taller, his shoulders became slightly broader, and his waist grew slightly slimmer, forming a perfect streamline figure.

Feeling the power flowing through his body, Zhang Xuan opened his eyes and clenched his fists tightly together. Wonderful!

With the sheer might of his physical body in itself, the current him could kill Saint 2-dan experts easily. In terms of resilience, his body was already comparable to a Saint artifact!

A Saint low-tier artifact to be exact, but nevertheless, it was still extremely fearsome.

Should someone attempt to hack the Glacier Rain Sword down on him right now, there was no doubt that it was the Glacier Rain Sword that would shatter.

In fact, even if he were to go head-to-head with the Golden Origin Cauldron, he wouldn't lose by much.

It could be said that the current him was no different from a human-shaped weapon. Even without a weapon in hand, he was still capable of causing devastating damage.

Hu!

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan swiftly concealed the changes in his body and stood up.

It was inconceivable for one's body to grow so much stronger with just a short moment of cultivation. There was no such thing as being too careful. In order to avoid any unnecessary trouble, it was still best for him to maintain a low profile.

Lowering his gaze to take a look, he noted that the energy contained within the Cinque Sun Branch was nearly completely depleted.

Stowing it in his storage ring, he stood up and returned to the door.

Before he could even reach the door, he saw the crowd sitting in a straight line before the door, creating a rather bizarre sight.

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the combat master at the very back stood up and greeted him. "Principal Zhang, you have returned."

"What are you doing?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

If you want to cultivate, so be it. But to be sitting in such a neat line as if you are queuing up at the cafeteria for food... What the heck?

"Ah, it's like this. Earlier, Wu shi realized that it is possible to use the heat released by the door to refine one's zhenqi and make it even purer. Thus, we began cultivating using it. However, due to our differing tolerance to heat, we can only select positions that are suited to us," the combat master explained.

"Differing tolerance to heat?" Zhang Xuan nodded contemplatively.

The fact that the sheer heat emanated from the door could melt the rocks within a hundred meters into lava clearly showed how fearsome it was. The extreme conditions produced by the door were indeed very suitable to refine one's zhenqi.

However, just as the other party said, everyone had a differing tolerance to heat. It was just like how his soul could only advance fifty meters at the start, but after cultivating for a bit, he was able to advance further and eventually reach the hundred-meter mark.

"Indeed. The few of us can only cultivate at a distance of forty meters away from the door, or else our cultivation could very well go berserk. Speaking of which, Wu shi and the others sure are fearsome. They are actually able to stand the heat at fifteen meters away," said the combat master as he shot a glance at the few figures in front with admiration gleaming in his eyes.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "To be able to withstand the heat at fifteen meters away, it seems like their physical bodies, souls, and zhenqi are pretty strong."

Zhang Xuan had only been able to reach twenty meters away from the door himself when he tried earlier. The fact that Wu shi and the others were able to reach fifteen meters away was indeed incredible.

The combat master suddenly recalled a matter and asked, "Right, Principal Zhang, didn't you leave to cultivate? Are you already done?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "Alright, I'll leave you to cultivate here."

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan began walking forward. In the blink of an eye, he was twenty meters away from the door.

At this moment, only Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, Feng Xun, and a couple of others were in front of him. Even Wo Tianqiong and the other principals were behind him at the moment.

"Principal Zhang... walked over there just like that? Wasn't he unable to hold on earlier?"

Seeing how the young principal casually proceeded toward the twenty meters mark as he nodded at the other master teachers and combat masters while passing by them, gesturing for them to remain seated and continue with their cultivation, the lower jaws of the combat master nearly fell to the ground.

At the same time, Feng Xun, who was seated at the nineteen-meter mark, saw Zhang Xuan walk past him with a smile on his face, and his eyes nearly popped out of his head.

He was a Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivator, a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, and coming to the nineteen-meter mark had nearly cost him his life. He had needed to sit down immediately to cultivate so that he could neutralize the fire poison in his body. Yet, that fellow was walking past him casually with a bright smile on his face, as if he was just wandering the streets, not pressured by the heat in the least. Did he have to be so exaggerated?

Wondering how far the other party would be able to proceed, Feng Xun's gaze followed Zhang Xuan, and before long, he saw the latter walk up to Wu shi and begin chatting with him.

"Wu shi, there is no need to get up. I am just heading over there to take a look, so do continue with your cultivation. There's no need to stand on ceremony."

Following which, the other party continued proceeding forward with a smile on his lips. Fourteen meters, thirteen meters, twelve meters... In the blink of an eye, he was already within ten meters of the door.

The searing heat induced a sizzling sound from his clothes, which were seemingly ready to break apart at any moment. Yet, Zhang Xuan continued walking forward with the same bright smile from before, as if he was completely impervious to the heat.

"This..."

This time, Feng Xun wasn't the only one who was shocked silly. Even Wu shi and Guild Leader Han ended up trading shocked glances with one another, and their mouths began twitching from the sheer ridiculousness of the sight before them.

Fifteen meters already left them feeling as if their bodies were going to rip apart, and that fellow had actually managed to walk within ten meters. On top of that, his face even had a smile plastered on, as if it was nothing at all. That monster...

Eight meters, seven meters, six meters...

As the other party slowly proceeded closer to the door, his eyebrows inadvertently shot up, seemingly starting to feel the pressure.

Hong long!

Zhenqi abruptly burst forth from the acupoints of the other party, wrapping his body.

Upon seeing this sight, Wu shi gulped. "He is only using his zhenqi when he is five meters away from the door? Just how powerful is his physical body?"

When Zhang Xuan walked leisurely past him, seemingly unfazed by the heat, he had thought that the other party was just putting on an act. However, seeing that the other party was only driving his zhenqi when he was five meters away from the door, he realized that he had been sorely mistaken.

The other party was truly unfazed by the heat!

But still, to only have to drive his zhenqi when he was within a five meters radius of the door... wasn't his physical body a little too strong?

Could the other party have gone away to cultivate his physical body?

But... it was common knowledge that the physical body was the most difficult of all to cultivate! How did he manage to make such a huge breakthrough in his physical body cultivation within just two hours?

Amidst his shock, he saw Principal Zhang walk all the way up to the door, raise his hand, and place it on the door. After that, he abruptly retreated eight steps before coming to a halt.

He closed his eyes, seemingly musing over something.

A moment later, he opened his eyes once more, and with a deep frown, he stared at the door ahead of him with a peculiar expression on his face.

"This... how is it possible?"

Chapter 1037

The Frenzied Luo Ruoxin!

Noting the peculiar expression on Zhang Xuan's face, Wu Shi couldn't help but ask, "Principal Zhang, is there something wrong with the seal?"

In his view, Principal Zhang was a person who would retain his composure even if the world was about to collapse on them. Yet, for him to show such an expression at this moment... something huge must have happened!

"Oh, it's nothing much. I just find it a little weird..." Zhang Xuan's words petered out into silence, seemingly not intending to say anything more about it. He walked to a distance of forty meters away and beckoned everyone over. "Everyone, halt your cultivation for just a moment. Let's discuss how we should break the seal and enter the door."

Hearing those words, the crowd hurriedly rushed over with eyes lit up in excitement. "Principal Zhang, have you found a way to overcome the seal?"

"I did manage to find a way, but..."

Scratching his head, Zhang Xuan had no idea where he should start from. What he had just seen was simply too inconceivable for anyone to believe to be true. Thus, he decided to just get straight to the point. "Do any of you have the Spirit Solution of Vigor with you?"

"Spirit Solution of Vigor?"

Everyone glanced at one another in astonishment, not knowing why Zhang Xuan was asking such a thing.

Spirit Solution of Vigor was the academic name for the urine of saint beasts so that it didn't sound as crass. Usually, cultivators would take some when they travelled so that they could demarcate a zone to prevent spirit beasts from harassing them at night.

Back when Zhang Xuan challenged You Xu to a Physician Life-and-Death Duel, he had

forced You Xu to drink it, leaving him feeling so indignant that he nearly spurted blood.

"Considering how old the ancient domain will be, I assumed that there wouldn't be any saint beasts and spirit beasts, so I didn't bring any along with me."

"Same as well. I usually bring some with me, but as I grew stronger, I found that the occasions I needed any were growing fewer and fewer. Furthermore, it feels a little crass to have such an item in my storage ring, so I threw it away!"

"We of the Combat Master Hall never use such a thing. If spirit beasts dare to engage us, we just slaughter them. As long as enough blood is shed, the others know better than to provoke us."

...

The crowd shook their heads.

Those who had participated in the expedition were all respectable individuals; Han Xu was the head of the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild; Wu Rufeng and Mu Yuan were 7-star master teachers; Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran were the principals of Master Teacher Academies.

Given so, they would never keep something as crass as the urine of saint beasts in their storage rings.

As for the Combat Master Hall, they didn't have the habit of bringing the Spirit Solution of Vigor with them. Thus, it turned out that there was no one in the expedition team who had it!

"None of you have any?" Zhang Xuan pinched his glabella before turning to Luo Ruoxin.

Noting Zhang Xuan's gaze on her, the young lady snorted, "I don't have any either!"

"I see. Since no one has any with them..." Zhang Xuan shook his head regrettably before taking out a pile of pots, bowls, gourds, and woks and saying helplessly, "We will just have to do it ourselves."

Pu!

Everyone staggered weakly and nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

From searching for the Spirit Solution of Vigor to having us produce it ourselves... What the heck is with this twist?

Furthermore, we are all respectable figures! To urinate like that...

Everyone felt like their mind was going to blow from the sheer insanity of the situation they were facing.

Ignoring the conflicted faces around him, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "Hurry up. Also, we will need as much as possible. Whether we can break the seal or not will depend on how much you are able to produce!"

"I..."

In that moment, everyone felt like crying.

"Alright. Gauge your own personal circumstances and grab a tool that is the most suited for you," Zhang Xuan said as he gestured at the pots, bowls, gourds, and woks beside him.

He had obtained all of those from the storage rings of the Otherworldly Demons. Those were probably the tools that they used to cook, and they were exceptionally clean, making them ideal containers to store their urine.

"Alright then..."

Seeing the earnest look on Zhang Xuan's face, the crowd could tell that he wasn't just trying to make fun of them. Thus, after exchanging glances, they eventually nodded before grabbing an item each with gritted teeth.

Hu hu hu!

In the blink of an eye, they disappeared from sight.

There was no way they were going to urinate in front of so many people; it was too embarrassing!

Soon, only Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin were left in the square.

Seeing that the young lady hadn't taken anything yet, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a

moment before picking up a cup from the ground. "Cough cough. This is for you."

"You..."

Luo Ruoxin's teeth were gritted so tightly together that it seemed as if they were going to chip from the immense pressure between them. She glared coldly at the fellow before her, tempted to kill him with a single slap.

"What's wrong?" Noticing Luo Ruoxin's look of displeasure, Zhang Xuan panicked. "Is it too small? Then... what about this?"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan hurriedly passed a huge pot over.

"Scram!" Luo Ruoxin bellowed furiously, nearly driven insane by Zhang Xuan's actions.

She had always been considered a goddess regardless of where she went, an existence whom others looked up to. Yet, this fellow actually passed her a cup... And, as if that wasn't bad enough, he even tried to pass her a pot afterwards!

Are you trying to say that I will be able to fill that huge pot up?

Shall I show you what hell looks like?

Not expecting the other party to snub his goodwill and even bellow at him to scram, Zhang Xuan pouted in indignation. "If you are unwilling to do it, so be it. There is no need to get angry over it..."

"You..." Luo Ruoxin felt the final string of rationality in her mind threatening to snap.

In her entire life, she had never gotten emotional over anything, as if a spectator of the world or a still painting. However, ever since she met this fellow, she had found all kinds of emotions coming to her. It was as if someone had vanquished the silence from her life.

"Alright, alright. I'll leave." Seeing how Luo Ruoxin would erupt if he said a word more, Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned around and fled.

However, even after Zhang Xuan's departure, Luo Ruoxin still felt the flames of anger burning intensely within her, unable to be quelled without a good beating of him. While she was considering whether or not she should catch up to fellow back and give

him a piece of her mind, she suddenly heard a distressed voice from not too far away.

"I don't have anything to pee out of! What do I do? Can anyone help me?"

Luo Ruoxin turned her gaze over and saw the Golden Origin Cauldron looking around anxiously, seemingly looking for help.

"Don't leave! Won't any of you aid me? Or, Master, can you smith one for me?"

"..."

Dark lines streaked across Luo Ruoxin's face.

Just what kind of people had she gotten involved with?

...

Oblivious to the reason behind the young lady's rage, Zhang Xuan found himself an isolated area as well. However, at this moment, a thought flashed across his mind, and he slapped his forehead in realization.

How could I have been so silly?

The next moment, he disappeared from the spot and entered the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Floating in midair, Zhang Xuan loudly bellowed, "All of you, come over!"

Hu hu hu!

In the blink of an eye, all of the saint beasts within the Myriad Anthive Nest flew over.

Knowing that the ancient domain would be dangerous, he had made sure to bring a few more saint beasts with him when he returned to the Master Teacher Academy. Taking into account the Byzantium Helios Beast and the nine kings of the Cloudmist Ridge as well, he had more than several dozen saint beasts in the Myriad Anthive Nest in total.

"I need all of you to urinate for me!" Saying those words, Zhang Xuan passed a pile of pots toward the beasts as well.

"Roar?"

"Roar!"

The beasts were bewildered by the abrupt command, but considering that the other party was their master, they dared not act against his command. Thus, they took a large pot each and turned around.

In an instant, an overwhelming stench filled the Myriad Anthive Nest.

A few moments later, the beasts returned with huge pots in their hands, each weighing ten jin 1 at the very minimum.

Quite a number of these saint beasts had massive physiques, boasting both heights and lengths of several meters. Naturally, the amount of urine they released was also proportionate to their size.

"Not bad!"

Seeing how the bunch of fellows didn't disappoint, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. With a swift movement, he poured all of the Spirit Solution of Vigor together into a massive pail. All in all, it weighed more than two thousand jin!

"Alright, you all can get back to whatever you were doing previously!" Zhang Xuan dismissed the saint beasts with a wave of his hand before leaving the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Returning back to the door, he noted that there were quite a few people who had returned. Most of them were from the Combat Master Hall.

"Here is what you needed!" Feng Xun harrumphed as he passed a pot over.

The others also hurriedly did the same as well, but the quantity wasn't a lot. The ten or so members of the Combat Master Hall had only produced around half a pot in total.

"So little?" Zhang Xuan glanced at the pot before turning his gaze back to the powerful-looking members of the Combat Master Hall with a deep frown.

So many lively young men, and yet, this was all they could produce?

Recalling how badly he had been pummeled, Feng Xun suddenly felt a surge of rage and lashed out. "Little? What about yours? Why don't you bring yours out to show us then?"

"I..." Zhang Xuan was just about to speak when Wu shi, Mu shi, Wo Tianqiong, and the other master teachers flew over. Their faces were all reddened in embarrassment.

Putting theirs together, they realized that their amount didn't even come close to the combat masters'.

"This..." Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a surge of helplessness.

It was fortunate that he was sharp enough to think of a backup plan, or else, with that pitiful amount that all of them had produced, it wouldn't even be enough to water a plant, let alone break a formation.

"Forget it, the amount you all have is too little. Let's use mine instead!" Seeing how the amount from everyone combined did not even add up to a single pot, Zhang Xuan shook his head and tossed it aside casually.

Feeling humiliated by Zhang Xuan's words, Feng Xun lashed out furiously. "Use yours? Can yours be more than all of us combined?"

"This is mine."

Boom!

A massive wooden pail weighing over two thousand jin 2 fell onto the ground, raising a cloud of dust in the air.

Pu!

"How is that possible?" Seeing the massive pail, the eyes of the combat masters and master teachers couldn't help but fly around the place, frenzied by what they were seeing.

Even if your bladder is big, surely there should be a limit to it. With so much water, it could easily drown you several times over. How in the world did you manage to find so much water within you?

The one who took the heaviest blow from this matter was naturally Feng Xun. He felt blood gushing up his throat once more.

Just how in the world did you manage to pull this off?

It is one thing for you to be strong, but to be able to urinate so much... is there a folded space in your bladder?

If we had known that you were able to produce so much, we wouldn't have bothered going through all the trouble!

"Alright, I'm going to break the seal now."

Ignoring the looks on the faces around him, Zhang Xuan raised the pail with his hand, and with a step, he flew into the sky, heading for the seal.

On the other hand, hearing that Zhang Xuan was about to break the seal, the others quickly snapped out of their frenzied states and hurriedly turned their gazes toward the door.

They had studied the seal carefully earlier, but they had not been able to find any other method to break it. Even the Otherworldly Demons that had come before them had been left with no choice but to resort to brute force, attacking it relentlessly. Yet, Principal Zhang was actually able to find a solution just by touching it, instructing them to gather their urine right afterward.

Everyone was curious to see just what the method of breaking the seal was for it to require urine.

Hu!

Before everyone's gazes, Zhang Xuan arrived directly above the door, and with a grim look, he tapped on the bottom of the pail.

Boom!

A huge hole immediately appeared in the pail, and the content stored within fell toward the seal.

Tzzzzzzzz!

As if sulfur meeting metal, upon contact with the seal, a sound of corrosion immediately sounded from the seal. In an instant, the incomparably sturdy seal dissipated into nothingness.

Chapter 1038

How Big!

"This..." Taking the scene into sight, Guild Leader Han suddenly thought of something, and his eyes narrowed. With a quivering voice, he said, "I've got it..."

"Got it?"

"What's going on?"

Seeing that Guild Leader Han had managed to make sense out of what had just happening, the confused crowd immediately turned their gazes to him.

Even the full might attack from the Saint 4-dan Wu shi had barely fazed that seal, so why would pouring a little of... that kind of stuff dissipate it?

"If I am not mistaken, the seal is probably of pure yang attribute, which makes it extremely vulnerable to contamination and water. If it was only plain water, the seal wouldn't have fallen apart that easily. But if one were to use the Spirit Solution of Vigor, it would curb the pure yang attribute of the seal, resulting in its swift dissipation," Guild Leader Han explained.

"Do formations of pure yang attribute have such properties? Why haven't I heard of it before?" Wu shi frowned.

He had met quite a few pure yang formations before, but he had never heard that they could be destroyed so easily with urine. If that was truly the case, wouldn't the existence of such formations be completely meaningless?

"Ordinary pure yang formations don't have such a property, but... if it is a perfected pure yang formation, that would be a different matter. Actually, most formations are vulnerable to contamination. For example, there are reports of a group that was trapped in a Confinement Formation for an extended period of time, unable to break out. However, when one of the ladies in the group gave birth 1 , the spiritual energy powering the formation abruptly dispersed, resulting in the collapse of the formation!" Guild Leader Han said.

"That..." Mu shi nodded in agreement. "I think I have heard of such a matter as well."

It was due to this that there were those who used the blood released by a pregnant woman during childbirth to forge artifacts to destabilize and destroy formations.

After explaining the matter, Guild Leader Han couldn't help but glance at the young man not too far away and remark meaningfully, "But to be able to tell the flaws of the seal with just a single look, Principal Zhang's comprehension of formations has reached an astounding level."

In truth, breaking a perfected pure yang formation wasn't as easy as just pouring the Spirit Solution of Vigor on it. If one failed to find the crux of the formation and weaken it with the Spirit Solution of Vigor right from the start, not only would one be unable to break the formation, the formation might even retaliate.

Taking the seal for example, judging from how it would release a burst of energies whenever it came under attack, it seemed like it had been built with the ability to retaliate against any attacks. Haphazard movements against it could potentially put one in danger.

While Principal Zhang's actions seemed simple, simply pouring the pail of Spirit Solution of Vigor over the seal, in truth, the height at which the pail was at, the force that its contents fell on the seal with, and the area where its contents would land... all of these had to be precisely calculated, not the slightest margin of error would be tolerated.

It was extremely challenging on one's control.

Most probably, only that monster was able to think of such a method to overcome the formation and even succeed on his first try.

One of the combat masters couldn't help but ask, "But such a bizarre method of overcoming the seal... how did the old principal and the others manage to enter back then? Were they really able to think of the same solution as well?"

The others were also puzzled by this bewildering fact.

It was apparent that such a bizarre method could only be thought of and pulled off by the seemingly omnipotent Principal Zhang. Considering the straightforward and austere personality of the old principal, Zhang Yinqiu, there was no way he would ever

have thought of or even tried such a method.

After contemplating for a brief moment, Guild Leader Han said, "I am not sure how they got in, but... it is likely that they might have possessed some information that we are unaware of, or perhaps they were in possession of a key that allowed them to bypass the seal!"

Most ancient domains were built with the welfare of the later generations in mind. As such, they often came with a key or a unique artifact that granted those in possession of it to bypass the various traps and formations laid all across the ancient domain.

"That might very well be the case." The crowd nodded in agreement.

Indeed. Had it been not for Principal Zhang's help, they could very well have been still stuck at the trial above, completely helpless as to how they should proceed. It was hard to imagine that the old principal and his team could fare better than them without a key in hand.

Geji! Geji!

While they were talking, the wooden pail had finally been emptied, and the seal began to shatter. A moment later, the massive door opened up before everyone's eyes.

"We can enter now!" Seeing that the door had finally been opened, Zhang Xuan tossed his wooden pail to the side and heaved a sigh of relief.

Through the flaws listed in the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan had learned that the formation was a perfected pure yang formation, which made the Spirit Solution of Vigor a perfect counter it. It was with this knowledge in mind that he had formulated such a daring plan, but who would have thought that it would actually work?

"Alright!" The crowd nodded before quickly moving toward the door.

Wu shi was still the first to lead the way, and only after confirming that there was no danger inside did he beckon the others over as well.

The area outside the door was incomparably hot, but upon stepping into the passageway within the door, the heat seemed to have disappeared all of a sudden. On the contrary, there was even a cooling breeze on the other side of the passageway, as if everything they had experienced just a moment ago was an illusion.

Bewildered by the abrupt changes in his surroundings, one of the combat masters asked, "Was it just my imagination?"

Given how the heat had been emanated from the door, they had thought that the other side of the door would have been so incomparably hot that it would be unbearable. Yet, it was completely different from what they had expected. Not only was it not hot, it was even... cooling?

Was everything that they had just undergone a moment ago nothing more than a figment of their imagination?

That would truly have been eerie!

"Don't panic. Our previous experiences with the intense heat and the lava were real, and what we are feeling at this very moment isn't an illusion either!" Guild Leader Han said in assurance. "It is very likely that there is a formation set up around here that allows one to alter the temperature of the surroundings freely. It is similar to the ones used in Formation Master Guilds, albeit a more extreme version."

Most Formation Master Guilds had a formation that controlled the conditions within it, such as the temperature, so as to create a comfortable environment for the formation masters to work in.

One reason there would be such a steep difference in the environment could be due to a similar formation being set up within the door.

"That's indeed possible..." Hearing the explanation, the crowd nodded in agreement.

Even though it was inconceivable to them that one could induce such a steep change in the surrounding temperature through just a formation, they also knew that the person who had left behind the ancient domain had been an expert far beyond their caliber, so it was unwise to gauge the other party by their standards.

After all, their experiences were limited by their cultivation, so what might have seemed unbelievable to them might not necessary be impossible. Principal Zhang overcoming the seal with the Spirit Solution of Vigor was one example of that.

"It isn't a formation."

At this moment, a voice suddenly sounded. The one who had spoken was neither Wu

shi nor Zhang Xuan, but the reticent Luo Ruoxin.

"What else can it be if not a formation?" Noting Luo Ruoxin's confident tone, the crowd couldn't help but feel a little bewildered.

"It's a type of spatial manipulation!" Luo Ruoxin replied.

"Spatial manipulation?" The crowd glanced at one another, unable to comprehend what had just been said.

"It is similar to the concepts used in storage rings. Stepping across the door has already brought us to another dimension, and it goes without saying that the environment will be completely different from before. The only reason you didn't notice it is due to the seal cast over the door," Luo Ruoxin said.

"We are in another dimension?" The bodies of the crowd jolted in astonishment upon hearing those words.

A formation was still a concept that was relatable to the crowd, but the laws of space were beyond their comprehension.

For the elder who had left behind the ancient domain to be able to manipulate even space itself, just how powerful an expert was he?

"It is said that Saint 9-dan experts are capable of comprehending the laws of space, allowing them to set up folded spaces that are capable of sustaining life. Could it be that the master of the ancient domain has reached such a level as well?" Wu shi muttered with fists clenched in agitation.

As a 7-star high-tier master teacher, he was privy to some information regarding the top echelons of the Master Teacher Continent. As rare as Saint 9-dan experts were, there were still some books regarding them in the Master Teacher Pavilion that others could learn from.

Experts of that caliber were already far beyond their reach, existences that they could barely fathom. Even a mechanism or formation that they set up on a whim could easily blow their minds.

Hearing those words, Luo Ruoxin shook her head with her eyes lowered slightly. It was hard to tell whether that gesture was directed toward Wu shi's response or a

contemplative gesture on her part.

Only Saint 9-dan experts are capable of comprehending the laws of space? Zhang Xuan blinked in astonishment.

In truth, he hadn't thought that spatial manipulation would be such an advanced ability.

He had once entered a folded space back at the Saint Ascension Platform, and he had even ordered the Myriad Anthive Queen to assimilate it into her nest. If that was the case, did it mean that the place had been left behind by a Saint 9-dan expert as well?

Back then, Kong shi had only achieved a breakthrough to Saint realm, so it was impossible for him to have set it up himself. That would mean that there was already a loyal Saint 9-dan subordinate following him even back then.

However, considering the incredible prowess and the unique charisma that Kong shi commanded, it would not have been too difficult for him to take in a couple of followers who boasted strength greater than him.

Back then, when I first met Luo Ruoxin in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy during the public lecture event, she was able to maneuver through the bustling crowd without anyone coming close to touching her at all. That seems to have been spatial manipulation as well.

Such an idea emerged in Zhang Xuan's mind, but he soon shook his head with a bitter smile. No, that should be impossible. She's only a 6-star master teacher, so even if she is stronger than me, she can't possibly be too far ahead. It is probably some kind of secret art or unique artifact.

Having read all of the books in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan had learned that the Master Teacher Continent was filled with all kinds of wonders. On top of unique constitutions that could emerge randomly among fortunate individuals from time to time, there were also formidable clans who possessed special bloodlines. Through the power of their bloodline, they could draw forth exceptional strength that had the potential to exceed any battle techniques in the world.

This was also the reason the Sage Clans wielded immense power in the Master Teacher Continent, with only few daring to oppose them.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan turned to Luo Ruoxin and asked, "How can you be certain that it isn't a formation but a type of spatial manipulation?"

Hearing those words, Wo Tianqiong and the others turned their gazes over as well.

Concepts relating to space were extremely profound, far beyond what they could comprehend at their current level.

Luo Ruoxin pointed a finger forward and said, "That's simple. Just look ahead and you will know."

The crowd hurriedly turned their eyes over, and at the other end of the passageway they were currently in, the scenery abruptly changed.

Meandering mountains that stretched into the horizon were filled with lush greenery. The air was comfortable, very different from the warm and dry environment around Firesource City. It was as if they had stepped into an entirely different world.

"Is this... a folded space? It's massive!" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had encountered quite a few folded spaces so far, and he even possessed a decent-sized one himself. However, one as large as the one before him... he had never thought that it would be possible for a folded space to be that large, let alone see one!

He had thought that his folded space was already rather incredible to span several hundred meters from one end to the other, but the one before him could house mountains and rivers that extended to the horizon. Frightening!

The larger a folded space was, the greater the pressure it would face from the external world, thus making it less stable.

How in the world did the master of the ancient domain manage to create and maintain such a large folded space?

Just as Zhang Xuan was completely astounded by the sight before him, Guild Leader Han's voice suddenly sounded at that moment. He quickly turned his gaze toward the latter, only to see the latter's body completely stiffened in shock.

"No, this isn't a folded space; this is a Spatial Formation!"

Just some explanation:

In Library of Heaven's Path, seal is a type of formation as well, similar to Hidden Formation, Slaughter Formation, Beguilement Formation etc.

Chapter 1039

Unbounded Voyager (1)

"Spatial Formation?" Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

He had heard of Confinement Formations, Illusory Formations, and Slaughter Formations, but a Spatial Formation... How was it different from folded spaces?

"Spatial Formation refers to the construction of space within a formation itself. Its stability is inferior to folded spaces, but its structure is more suited to contain other formations within it. In other words, there could be many Slaughter Formations, Beguilement Formations, Illusory Formations, and the sort hidden within it, making it extremely dangerous. Often, those who step into Spatial Formations aren't even aware of it themselves," Guild Leader Han said with a trembling voice.

As a 7-star pinnacle formation master, he knew how fearsome Spatial Formations were. Those who stepped into one would find their minds being led on by the distorted spatial laws within it, making it impossible for them to escape it. More importantly, it was possible that there could be other formidable Slaughter Formations or the sort hidden within the Spatial Formation, making it extremely dangerous for even the strongest of experts. As long as one hadn't reached Saint 9-dan, it would be near impossible to overcome it.

After hearing those words, the crowd couldn't help but frown.

They didn't fully comprehend how frightening Spatial Formations were, but for the composed Guild Leader Han to show such a response, there was no doubt that they were something extremely frightening.

"What if we were to destroy the Spatial Formation?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Regardless of how formidable a formation was, there was nothing that couldn't be overcome with a kick from him. There was really no need for the other party to be so worried over this matter!

"Putting aside the fact that it is near impossible to destroy a Spatial Formation, unless

you are capable of surviving the shattering of space, it would be wiser for you not to do," Guild Leader Han said.

Zhang Xuan's lips twitched upon hearing those words.

The shattering of space was not something that he could withstand even if he were to raise his cultivation by seven realms at this very instant. In shattered space, even a Primordial Spirit would be torn to shreds in an instant!

How could beings who existed in space possibly survive in the absence of it?

To make an analogy, what would hair latch onto in the absence of skin?

"Indeed! This is precisely why we can only advance along the path that the creator of the Spatial Formation has determined step by step." At this point, Guild Leader Han's voice suddenly grew grim. "At this point, I believe that we can say that we are already in the ancient domain. Every step that we take from this point onward will be fraught with dangers."

"Fraught with dangers..."

Those words left the crowd with grave expressions on their faces as well.

It was indeed very difficult for them to bypass the first two trials that they faced, but at the very least, it couldn't really have been considered dangerous.

For the first trial, even if they had not passed through the lava to reach the area beneath it, they would have been in no immediate danger for the time being.

As for the second trial, as long as they didn't attack the seal, it would have been possible for them to have survived in the area for several years without trouble.

But at this point, Guild Leader Han's words seemed to be indicating that danger was lurking everywhere around them. Regardless of whether they chose to move or remain stationary, to take on a passive approach or explore actively, danger could still spring forth at any moment.

They were going to face the true trial of the ancient domain from this point on.

"Since we are already here, we can only look forward and deal with whatever comes

our way. If we are really in the ancient domain now, Zhang Yinqiu and the others should have passed through this area as well. As long as we can find a way to trace their route, we should be able to steer clear of most danger!" Wo Tianqiong said.

"You're right!" Others quickly voiced their agreement.

They had already prepared themselves for death when they made the decision to join the expedition back then. If they were truly already in the ancient domain, they should be glad that they were on the right track.

"Zhang Yinqiu and the others came by two years ago, so any traces they have left behind should have been erased by now. However, since he was able to send his Principal's Seal out, there is a good chance that he is currently trapped at a certain part of the ancient domain. If that deduction holds true, we should be able to find something while advancing ahead," Wu shi said as he took the lead.

There was no one who could say for sure at this point whether the old principal was dead or not. However, given that the latter had been able to send his Principal's Seal out, there was a good chance that he was still alive at this point. If so, he would have surely left some traces behind so that they could find him. Otherwise, there would have been very little meaning to him sending a help signal to them.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded as he activated his Eye of Insight to examine his surroundings.

A moment later, he couldn't help but shake his head.

Regardless of whether they were in a Spatial Formation or a folded space, there was one thing for sure—the person who had created the ancient domain possessed a cultivation far greater than his. The vast disparity in strength made it impossible for him to discern anything even through the powerful Eye of Insight.

Flaws! Zhang Xuan willed.

A moment later, he shook his head once more.

The Library of Heaven's Path could only compile a book on the items that he was in contact with or were currently active.

While the Spatial Formation was a formation as well, as the mountains and rivers in

his surroundings weren't the direct manifestation of the Spatial Formation, he was unable to compile a book on it in the Library of Heaven's Path. The only way he could do so was probably only if he could get an overview of the functioning of the entire Spatial Formation.

This was similar to how he couldn't possibly use the sunrise and sunset or the changing weather to compile a book regarding the flaws of the Master Teacher Continent.

Even the overpowered Library of Heaven's Path couldn't work its wonders against something as expansive as the Spatial Formation they were in.

It seems like we can only proceed forward a step at the time. Seeing that there were no shortcuts he could take, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply in frustration before following behind the crowd.

Honestly speaking, the Spatial Formation was truly incredible. Had they not known that they were deep underground, beneath a hundred meters of lava, they might have really thought that they had entered a warm mountain range in the midst of spring.

Surrounded by lush green plants, the crowd couldn't help but forget the fear of being within an ancient domain. Slowly, a feeling of leisure crept upon them.

A light mountain breeze blew, and the leaves rustled under its tugging. Such natural call of nature left them feeling incredibly relaxed, as if they had entered a utopia free of hardship and struggles.

"It doesn't seem like there is any danger around?"

"Indeed! Not only so, the area is also very rich in spiritual energy. If the day comes when I wish to retire and back away from the material world, I think I would want to live here!"

"This is indeed a good environment, very suited for cultivating one's heart..."

...

The leisurely atmosphere in the air made the combat masters and master teachers a little more talkative than usual.

Previously, when Guild Leader Han spoke about how there might be dangers pouncing on them at every step, they had been scared out of their wits. But when they began making their way through the Spatial Formation, they realized that it was far from what Guild Leader Han had said. Rather than threatened, they felt calm and peaceful.

They couldn't help but desire to live in a place as peaceful as this for the rest of their lives.

Hearing those words, a thought suddenly sprouted within Guild Leader Han's eyes, and sharpness abruptly returned to his glazed eyes. "No, something is wrong. Everyone, stay alert! We are already under attack!"

One of the combat masters chuckled. "We are under attack? Guild Leader Han, you must be joking! I'm sure that we will know if we are under attack!"

Another combat master nodded in agreement. "Indeed. I think Guild Leader Han is just being a little too apprehensive. There is no way so many of us wouldn't notice it if we are being attacked!"

As veterans of the battlefield, they were conditioned to instinctively retaliate toward any offense directed at them. If there was truly an attack against them, they couldn't possibly still be in the leisurely state they were in at the moment.

"An attack that is unnoticeable is the most fearsome of all!" Guild Leader Han exclaimed lividly.

If it was a direct attack, they would at least still have been able to put their lives on the line and fight their way out. What was truly frightening would be when one didn't even realize that one was being attacked. As if frogs being cooked in warm water, they wouldn't even notice what was happening to them until their moment of death!

"Did Guild Leader Han notice something?" Wu shi asked.

"Did you notice how our wariness has slackened ever since we entered this ancient domain? In our current state, there is no way we will be able to put up any defenses should danger abruptly spring on us!" Guild Leader Han said. "More importantly... did you notice that we have already been walking for some time now? Yet, the end is nowhere in sight. It is as if there is some kind of power pulling us along, making us walk for all eternity to come! There is something really amiss with the situation here."

"This..." Wu shi was taken aback.

Now that the other party had pointed it out explicitly to him, he also realized that there was something very wrong with the situation as well.

In the first place, it was bizarre that they would be in such a leisurely state, neglecting to even put their guards up, considering the fact that they were venturing into uncharted territory. As veteran master teachers and combat masters, there was no way they would make such an elementary mistake.

Pu!

While the duo was still speaking, a peculiar sound echoed clearly ahead of them. Turning their gazes over, they saw that the face of the combat master who had just said that Guild Leader Han was being too apprehensive had turned ghastly pale, and blood was streaming down the corner of his mouth profusely. Yet, a smile remained plastered on his face as he trudged forward resolutely.

"This..."

That fellow was clearly in a bad state, his face turning paler at a visible rate as blood rained down his chin, but his lips were still curled up into the most peaceful of smiles.

This sight left goosebumps rising on the hands of the duo.

It was simply too eerie!

As knowledgeable and well-read as they were, they had never encountered something as sinister as this.

After taking a look, Wu shi observed with an awful complexion, "His current state is caused by exhaustion. His zhenqi has about to be depleted clean, and his stamina is swiftly approaching its limits."

As a 7-star master teacher, it wasn't too difficult for him to discern the source of injury of the combat master.

But... it hadn't been long since they had started walking?

Combat masters were renowned for their astounding endurance in battle, and yet,

that fellow was already at his limits after such a short walk?

Guild Leader Han couldn't help but be deeply perplexed by the bizarre matter. At this moment, Wu Shi suddenly exclaimed, "Guild Leader Han, take a look at your dantian!"

"Dantian?"

Taken aback by the abrupt words, Guild Leader Han hurriedly looked into his internal state, and what he saw left his eyes narrowing uncontrollably.

To his astonishment, the overwhelming zhenqi that he possessed had nearly been depleted as well. If one were to compare a cultivator's dantian to a lake, his would be one that had dried up to the point where one could already see the seabed.

"My zhenqi... How has it been depleted so quickly?" Guild Leader Han's body trembled in shock.

As a 7-star pinnacle formation master, a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, he was one of the strongest in the expedition, and he boasted the greatest zhenqi capacity as well. Putting aside walking, he could easily fight for four hours straight without being depleted.

But this... he had only walked for a short while—they weren't even flying—and yet, his dantian was nearly empty. What was happening?

This was really frightening!

Pu! Pu! Pu!

While Guild Leader Han was astonished over his internal state, the sound of someone spurting blood echoed around them once more. A few more combat masters who had a lower cultivation began spewing blood, and even Wo Tianqiong, Shen Pingchao, and Wu Ran had pale faces, and veins were popping from their temples. It looked like they were on the verge of running out of strength and collapsing.

This was exceptionally apparent for Wo Tianqiong, whose hair was turning white as well due to exhaustion. In this moment, it looked like he had aged by more than ten years.

"This..." Guild Leader Han's body shook fearfully as he turned a horrified glance

toward Wu shi.

He knew that the Spatial Formation would be fraught with dangers, but he didn't expect such a thing to happen. In fact, he wasn't able to make sense out of what was happening either.

"I have no idea what's going on." Wu shi shook his head, too.

It was always difficult for those who were trapped within the box to obtain a clear view of their current situation. Despite the many books they had read, they were still unable to comprehend the bizarre situation they were in.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan spoke.

"It is probably the sound of the breeze in the mountain. It is placing us into a trance in which our bodies deplete zhenqi faster than normal, and even our life force is gradually being sapped as well. If we don't find a way out of this situation, we will only continue walking tirelessly forward until we finally exceed our limits and die!"

The duo hurriedly turned their gazes over, only to see the young man with a deep frown etched on his forehead, seemingly deep in contemplation over something.

Chapter 1040

Unbounded Voyager (2)

"Sound of the breeze?" Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and the others were stunned before turning to look at their surroundings.

The sound of the breeze was extremely light, mixed in with the rustling of the leaves. Previously, they had thought that it sounded calm and peaceful, putting them in a state of tranquility. Listening to it once more, however, they thought that it sounded sinister, and they couldn't help but tremble in fear.

"Let's try sealing off our hearing," Guild Leader Han said.

But even after the both of them did so, the wind continued to whistle right in their head, keeping them tightly under its control.

Zhang Xuan shook his head and sent a telepathic message to them.

"It's futile. The sound of the breeze is a type of demonic tune. Even if we seal our sixth sense, it will still travel to our soul directly, making it impossible to fend it off."

If it was possible to seal off demonic tunes just by covering one's ears, it wouldn't have been worthy of the adjective 'demonic', let alone exist as a unique occupation that had been passed down for more than several dozen thousand years.

The duo released the seal on their hearing and asked anxiously, "Then, what do we do?"

Unable to ward off the demonic tune, they would be trapped in this hell of perpetual movement. It had not been easy for them to get into the ancient domain; were they really going to lose their lives at the very start?

"Principal Zhang... since you were able to sense that it's a demonic tune, do you have a solution for it?" Wu shi asked anxiously.

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan replied, "This is the demonic tune from

an 8-star demonic tunist; even I can only barely ward it off myself. If we intend to pull the others out of their trance, we will have to overcome the demonic tune with one of our own as well!"

He had noticed the demonic tune the moment he entered, and through his comprehension of demonic tunes and his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he was able to ward it off himself. However, he hadn't found a feasible to quell the demonic tune yet. There didn't seem to be any other way of going about doing it other than to overwhelm the sound of the breeze with his music, but to do so, he would have to achieve the level of proficiency comparable to an 8-star demonic tunist!

"Overcome the demonic tune with one of our own?"

The faces of the duo paled.

Where were they going to find an 8-star demonic tunist from out of the blue?

If they had a person of such capability in their ranks, the members of the expedition wouldn't have fallen into a trance in the first place.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "This demonic tune should be around the level of 8-star primary, or else your Primordial Spirits would have been affected by it as well, causing you to be unaware of your injuries like the others. However, my level of proficiency in demonic tunes is only at 6-star pinnacle at the moment. Even if I use my full strength, I won't be able overcome it."

The sound of the breeze was equivalent to the playing of an 8-star primary demonic tunist, or else there was no way Guild Leader Han and Wu shi would have been able to retain their consciousness before the sound.

Nevertheless, it was still at a level that Zhang Xuan couldn't stand against; his current strength was still too weak.

"What do we do then?"

"Do any of you have 7-star demonic tunist books?" Zhang Xuan asked.

If he could gather sufficient 7-star demonic tunist books to compile the 7-star Heaven's Path Demonic Tune Art, he would be able to face off with the 8-star primary demonic tune easily.

"7-star demonic tunist books?"

Guild Leader Han and Wu shi traded gazes before shaking their heads simultaneously.

One of them was a formation master whereas the other was a master teacher. While Wu shi had seven 7-star supporting occupation, it happened that demonic tunist was not one of them. As such, he didn't have such books with him.

"That will make things even more troublesome then." Zhang Xuan frowned.

If he couldn't raise his capabilities as a demonic tunist, it would be extremely hard for him to suppress the demonic tune.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said, "Why don't we do this? The both of you try to take care of the group here, make sure that they don't overexert themselves. If they are really reaching their limit, feed them a pill or something so as to replenish their zhenqi and stamina. Meanwhile, I will be trying to find the source of the sound. If I am able to find it, I might just be able to resolve the problem."

Since it was impossible for him to overcome with brute force, he would just have to search for the origin of the sound. Perhaps, he might be able to find a flaw regarding it there and destroy it at its source.

"Un. We will be troubling Principal Zhang then."

The duo bowed deeply.

Left with no other alternatives, this was the best option they had.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony." Zhang Xuan hurriedly helped them up before rushing in the direction where the sound of the breeze seemed to have come from.

The sound of the breeze was extremely faint, but there was a certain quality to it that left one feeling as if the world was spinning should one attempt to focus one's hearing on it. Had it not been for Zhang Xuan refining his soul further through the lava, he might have succumbed then and there.

Still feeling a little worried, Zhang Xuan took a glance backward and saw Wu shi and Guild Leader Han feeding a few of the combat masters who had just spurted blood earlier several pills, and their pale complexions alleviated considerably.

While the demonic tune causes a cultivator to deplete their zhenqi and stamina unnecessarily, it isn't really that dangerous. As long as the others are able to consume pills in time to replenish their energy, they should be able to hold on for quite a while, Zhang Xuan noted.

Even so, they were still marching forward uncontrollably, as if puppets on a string. At this point, they had also realized something was amiss, and they attempted to struggle against it as well. However, their efforts were completely futile.

To be completely helpless despite knowing that one was headed toward danger, unable to escape or retaliate... It was due to this that demonic tunists were so feared throughout the Master Teacher Continent, such that even the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had a specialized school devoted to the occupation.

After flying for around half an hour, Zhang Xuan came to an abrupt stop and frowned. He had flown several hundred kilometers, and yet, he realized that there was no change in the breeze sound at all. This meant that he wasn't even close to finding its source.

Wasn't the area of the sound a little too vast?

Taking himself as an example, the demonic tunes he played could place anyone within a radius of several hundred meters into a trance, and anything beyond that would be extremely strenuous and difficult for him. Even for an 8-star demonic tunist, it was unimaginable that the other party was capable of playing music that could span over a radius of several hundred kilometers!

If that was the case, wouldn't an 8-star demonic tunist be able to place several hundred million men into a trance simultaneously just by playing within the capital of any empire? Not even master teachers wielded prowess comparable to that!

At this point, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled a certain urban legend from his previous life known as the supernatural wall 1. Could this be the work of the Spatial Formation? I am certain that I have been walking in a single direction, but somehow, it seems as if I have been walking in circles, making no progress whatsoever.

Could it have been that his senses had been distorted to make him walk in endless circles?

In truth, such happenings weren't too rare in formations either.

Many Beguilement Formations had the effect of messing with a person's sense of direction or even the compass in their hands. They might be thinking that they were headed east, but in truth, they were headed in an entirely different direction.

Since this area has the effect of confusing one's sense of direction, I should set up a formation to help me with my directions.

Frowning, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a couple of formation flags.

He might have been unable to oppose the sound of the breeze with his current mastery of demonic tunes, but his proficiency in formations had already reached 7-star pinnacle. He could easily set up a formation that could help him navigate his way through the Spatial Formation.

Many formations flashed through Zhang Xuan's mind, and before long, a certain blueprint stood out. With a smile, he flicked his wrist.

Hu!

The formation flags immediately scattered from his hands, landing in specific positions.

Weng!

With a buzz, the formation came to life. Standing in the middle of it, Zhang Xuan closed his eyes.

Zhang Xuan smirked. As I thought! My sense of direction has indeed been distorted!

Through the formation, he could instantaneously tell that the direction he had been heading in previously was leading him in endless circles.

It seemed like the demonic tune wasn't the only thing that one had to be aware of in the Spatial Formation. If he hadn't noticed the issue with his sense of direction, he might very well have ended up walking for an eternity without walking out of the formation.

The old principal and the others should have taken the 'Direction Probing Needle', which Wu Yangzi forged all those years ago, with them. While the Direction Probing Needle isn't a saint artifact, it is exceptionally effective in identifying directions. Most

likely, it was due to such an artifact that they were able to find their way out of this Spatial Formation, Zhang Xuan thought.

It was apparent that the old principal had gotten out of the Spatial Formation. Otherwise, he would have reduced to bones long ago, and it would have been impossible for him to send out the Principal's Seal either.

Considering how they were able to find their way out despite possessing a cultivation far lower than Wu Shi and the others, it was certain that they had some kind of valuable artifact on them.

After reading through the many books in the Blacksmith School, Zhang Xuan was aware that there was a treasure that Wu Yangzi had deposited in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy known as the Direction Probing Needle!

It was a unique artifact that had been forged out of the elusive Direction Probing Wood. It couldn't be considered a saint artifact, but in the field of finding directions, there were barely any situations where it would fail.

However, it wasn't often that one would be in a situation that required such a tool, and Wu Yangzi didn't think that he would need it either. Thus, he had decided to donate it to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Before heading to Firesource City to meet the others, Zhang Xuan had visited the treasure vault of the academy, but he didn't find the Direction Probing Needle in there. Most likely, the old principal had borrowed it for the exploration of the ancient domain.

It was also fortunate that he had done so as well.

Of course, how long they took to clear the ancient domain was another matter entirely. Considering the limitations of the old principal's cultivation, it should have taken him a while to snap out from the trance of the demonic tunes, and he probably needed a little more time to realize the peculiarity regarding the Spatial Formation. In any case, Zhang Xuan didn't think that the old principal and his expedition team would have been able to resolve the matter as quickly as he did.

After all, even Wu Shi only realized that there was something amiss but couldn't pinpoint what it was back then. Zhang Xuan was the only one who had been able to see everything clearly due to his imperviousness to demonic tunes.

After confirming the direction, he leaped out from the formation and began flying in the direction he had identified via his formation earlier.

However, after flying roughly ten kilometers, he suddenly felt that he might have deviated from his original path once more. Thus, he quickly set up the same formation once more and swiftly found the correct direction before proceeding ahead.

After repeating the same cycle thrice, he finally found a massive stone tablet of three meters tall and two meters wide towering before him. It had a slightly pale exterior that seemed to hint at the long history behind it, battered by the wind and rain alike for many years.

It was vibrating gently, emitting a pleasant sound that intoxicated minds.

Walking up to it, Zhang Xuan saw three massive words inscribed majestically on it.

'The Unbounded World?'

Zhang Xuan frowned.

Gazing further down, he noticed several lines of smaller words written beneath the three massive words.

'All who enter the Unbounded World will be placed under the effects of a demonic tune, falling into a trance. Only those with the most resolute of minds will be able to break free of the trance and forge a path through this maze that I have built.

'Those who are capable of breaking free of the demonic tunes and find their way here within three days will be bestowed with my secret art. Those who manage to do so within ten days will be granted a life-changing encounter. Those who exceed ten days, I can only say that your aptitude is lacking. Since it is fate that you managed to find this tablet, allow me to advise you to leave this land as soon as possible!'

After reading the words on the tablet, Zhang Xuan blinked vacantly.

From the point that I stepped through the door till this moment, I think... it hasn't even been an hour yet. To bestow a secret art upon those who manage to find this tablet within three days, isn't this test a little too easy? Surely, there can't be any who are so foolish as to not realize that something is amiss even after three whole days, right? Zhang Xuan thought as he turned his gaze further lower down the stone tablet.

Several words in a different handwriting from those above came into sight.

'I, Zhang Yinqiu, together with my team, was lost within these lands for around half a month. With my humble capabilities, I dare not expect to earn anything out of this ancient domain. All I hope is that I arrived in time to stop the Otherworldly Demons.'

The old principal was lost in the Spatial Formation for more than half a month? Zhang Xuan's lips twitched awkwardly. Who would have thought that there are really people that foolish?

Chapter 1041

Secret Art

In Zhang Xuan's opinion, the moment that something happened to one of the expedition members while walking in the Spatial Formation, the group should have immediately realized that something was amiss. From that, it shouldn't be too difficult for them to deduce that they had been assaulted by demonic tunes. Through some trial and error, no matter how foolish they were, two to three days should have been more than sufficient for them to get to the stone tablet.

Yet, who would have thought that the old principal would actually take more than half a month to get here?

Weren't they a little too dimwitted to take that long?

Perhaps, it was due to the limitations of their cultivation. After all, even Principal Wo Tianqiong and the others were stuck in a trance for quite some time themselves, unaware of the changes in their surroundings.

After some contemplation, Zhang Xuan came up with a possible explanation.

Most of the expedition members that the old principal had brought along were the elders of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Saint 1-dan cultivators. Even the strongest of them all would only have been at Spiritual Perception realm.

So, it was likely that they had been in the same position as Wo Tianqiong and the other combat masters. As soon as they arrived, they were already put into a trance, making them unaware of their surroundings or even the state that they were in as well.

In such a situation, it would have been a huge blessing if they knew that they should consume a pill to replenish their energy, let alone uncovering the secrets of the Unbounded World.

But since the old principal has left his words here, it goes to show that he has managed to walk out of this area alive, Zhang Xuan noted.

This was the first trace of the old principal that they had encountered so far after all of the dangers they had been through, and with this, they could be entirely certain that they were on the right path.

It is written on the stone tablet that anyone who manages to reach this point within three days will be bestowed with a secret art. Let's see what kind of secret art I will get.

Knowing that it was more important to focus on what was ahead of him at this moment, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the stone tablet.

The stone tablet was made out of some kind of particularly heavy material, planting it firmly in place.

Circling around the stone tablet, he swiftly noticed a groove on it that one could place one's palm in. It felt as if some kind of unique power would come to life just by coming into contact with it.

To be careful, Zhang Xuan closely examined the stone tablet, and only after verifying that there were no dangers regarding it did he finally heave a sigh of relief. Nevertheless, he still prepared several defensive measures before finally reaching out to place his palm on the groove.

It couldn't be helped. They hadn't gotten a grasp on the identity or personality of the master of the ancient domain yet, so it was still best to remain on guard.

Weng!

As soon as his palm came into contact with the groove, a brilliant flash of light burst into the air, and the seemingly omnipresent demonic tune abruptly came to a halt.

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

With the halting of the demonic tune, the other members would finally be free from the effects of the demonic tunes, and the depletion of their zhenqi and stamina should have come to a stop, putting them out of harm's way.

Jiyaya!

The stone tablet suddenly jolted once more, and as if some kind of unique mechanism

or formation had come to life, a loud 'hu!' sounded. Following which, a figure came into appearance.

The figure was an elder with white hair and a beard. Despite being a mere fragmented soul, he emanated a sharp aura that exerted immense pressure upon one's psyche.

Wariness immediately surfaced in Zhang Xuan's eyes as he took a step back.
Powerful...

The elder was only a mere fragmented soul at the moment, on the verge of flickering out of existence after the passing of innumerable years. However, if the old elder were to make a move against him at this moment, there would still be nothing Zhang Xuan could do about it.

Even as a fragmented soul, the elder wielded absolute power that Zhang Xuan could never hope to rival in his current state. There was no doubt that the elder had at least been a Saint 5-dan expert back when he was still alive.

Otherwise, there was no way the other party could have left him feeling so apprehensive.

"There's no need to tense up, I mean you no harm. Allow me to introduce myself, I am the master of this ancient domain." Seemingly noticing the wariness in Zhang Xuan's eyes, the figure smiled. The elder spoke in an approving tone. "Considering how you were able to see through my trap and find this location so quickly, your mental resilience and eye of discernment are far superior to others. There is no doubt that you are qualified to learn my secret art!"

He had set the time limit to be three days, but the other party had spent no more than an hour to overcome his traps and find this stone tablet. Such an accomplishment was beyond his expectations.

With his hands behind his back, the elder said, "As a fragmented soul, I won't be able to remain here for long. So, hurry up and acknowledge me as your teacher!"

"Acknowledge you as my teacher?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Indeed. If you wish to obtain my heritage, you have to become part of my lineage. Otherwise, how can I impart my secret art to you?" the elder replied with a nod.

Lineage was extremely important when it came to the impartation of techniques. It was improper to learn the secret arts of another without becoming the other party's student.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but hesitate. "This..."

In his long journey, he had never acknowledged anyone as his teacher before. Even Kong shi had ended up being rejected by him.

Thus, he couldn't help but feel extremely reluctant to acknowledge a person from a shady background and whose name he didn't even know as his teacher.

Noticing Zhang Xuan's conflicted expression, the elder asked in astonishment, "What? Are you unwilling?"

Back when he was alive, the line of people who were queuing up to become his student could easily have circled a city many times over, and yet... he was offering to take the other party as his student so as to pass on his secret art, and yet, the other party was still hesitating. He couldn't help but find this situation unbelievable.

After a moment of thought, Zhang Xuan replied, "It is not that I am unwilling, but I already have a teacher of my own. Without his permission, it would be improper of me to take another man as my teacher."

He had created the identity 'Yang Xuan' to make things convenient for him, so naturally, he had no qualms about bringing it out in this situation either.

Upon hearing Zhang Xuan's worries, the elder chuckled softly. "It is impossible for a person to acknowledge only a single person as their teacher throughout their entire life. Even Kong shi acknowledged many teachers back then. This isn't something you need to worry about!"

Even though Kong shi was the World's Teacher, he had not been born almighty. It was through the accumulation of experiences and knowledge that he had eventually become the great man that he was. Naturally, it went without saying that he had taken many people as his teacher over the course of his journey as well, learning from their strengths to better himself.

Since that was the case for him, it should have been even more so for others. There was really no need for others to hesitate over such a matter.

"Elder, your words ring true. I was being too obsessed with appearances." Zhang Xuan nodded. A moment later, with a light smile, he continued. "I am willing to acknowledge you as my teacher, but is it possible for you to demonstrate the secret art that you are intending to impart to me first?"

"That's not a problem," the elder replied.

It was normal for a student to want to see how powerful the teacher was before acknowledging the other party. After all, there was no one who would wish to acknowledge someone who was less skilled than them as their teacher.

If he could win the other party's admiration, the other party would be more willing to acknowledge him as his teacher.

While such a request could be seen as a challenge toward his authority, considering that many years had passed since then and he hadn't revealed his identity either, it wasn't too surprising that he'd asked such a thing of him.

The elder placed his hands behind his back, and a strong air of confidence and indomitability burst forth from him.

"The secret art that I am going to impart you is a movement technique known as the Unbounded Voyager. There is a total of five dans to it, and if you cultivate it to Consummation, you will be able to disregard the confines of space itself and travel to wherever you want to in the shortest time possible!"

"Unbounded Voyager?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He had never heard of this movement technique before, but just from the majestic name alone, he could tell that it was an extremely fearsome move.

No wonder this Spatial Formation was known as the Unbounded World. Most likely, on top of assessing a cultivator's mental resilience, it also served to examine their understanding of space and direction as well.

Only those who possessed superior aptitude would be able to sense that something was amiss and find a solution to reach the stone tablet. And truthfully, if not for Zhang Xuan's enhanced senses from cultivating the Heaven's Path techniques, it would have been difficult for him to notice that something was amiss.

"Indeed. Barriers there may be between the heavens and earth, but the true voyager treads unbounded. If one wishes to learn the most advanced of movement techniques, they must abandon the boundaries they limit themselves by. Only when one's heart is unbounded can one travel unrestrained throughout the world," the figure said calmly.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

This was similar to how true swordsmanship, at its very core, was devoid of any maneuvers. To be limited by one's maneuvers signified that one was still stuck at the elementary level of swordsmanship.

True secret arts were techniques that had already surpassed the level of fixed maneuvers.

Even though Zhang Xuan had never seen the Unbounded Voyager before, he could tell just from those words alone that it was an extraordinary technique.

"Since you wish to see it, allow me to enlighten you!" Noticing the young man's astonishment, the elder knew that he had already succeeded in winning the other party over, and a smile surfaced on his lips.

Hu!

There was no apparent movement at all, but the elder simply vanished on the spot. In the next moment, he was already several kilometers away.

How swift! Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

He had been unable to follow the other party's movements with his eyes at all; it was already at a level comparable to teleportation! As powerful as the Heaven's Path Movement Art was, it appeared as slow as a snail in comparison to the Unbounded Voyager.

Of course, it didn't mean that the Heaven's Path Movement Art was an inferior technique. Rather, it was solely due to the huge difference in the tiers of both techniques.

The Heaven's Path Movement Art he was still cultivating at the moment was compiled based on the fundamental movement techniques that he had collected so far, and it hadn't even reached Saint-tier. It was understandable that it was weaker than the

Unbounded Voyager.

Hu!

While Zhang Xuan was in shock, the figure in the distance suddenly blurred, and in an instant, it abruptly returned to where it had been before. It was as if the elder had never moved in the first place, and the figure in the distance had just been a product of his imagination!

"Are you willing to learn it?" the elder asked with a chuckle.

Back then, even Kong shi had been filled with praise for this movement technique of his. He didn't believe that there was anyone who could reject it.

"Your movement technique is indeed incredible, but..."

Halfway through his words, Zhang Xuan suddenly paused, seemingly hesitating over something.

"But?" The elder frowned.

"There are a few flaws with it that compromise its strength," Zhang Xuan replied with a conflicted expression.

"Flaws? What arrogance! Someone of your strength is actually able to discern flaws in my movement technique?" Not expecting the young man before him to be so arrogant, the elder waved his hand in displeasure.

Paying no heed to the elder's rage, Zhang Xuan began speaking. "Firstly, when you were moving earlier, even though it happened so swiftly that it was hardly discernible, if I am not mistaken, you utilized zhenqi threads to facilitate the movement.

"The concept behind the technique is simple. It is to first thread one's zhenqi to the area where one intends to move to before dragging one's body over like a puppet. This allows one to move from area to area with inconceivable speed, such that it is almost at the level of teleportation, but it has a major flaw as well. If an enemy were to notice the secret behind the technique and sever the thread beforehand, it could lead to one travelling to an unexpected area instead. Should such a scenario occur in battle, it could end up leading one to expose a fatal weakness to one's enemy.

"Secondly, the technique is extremely demanding on one's zhenqi. While it does allow one to escape a fatal situation and flee to a safe location temporarily, the huge depletion of zhenqi resulting from it might deprive one of the ability to stand against one's enemy. Furthermore, if one's zhenqi were to run dry from the execution of the technique, it wouldn't take long for one's enemy to catch up, thus placing one in an extremely dangerous position. As such, it is not a technique that one can frequently use in battle.

"Thirdly, moving at such speed is highly strenuous on one's body. You are able to do it easily because you are currently in the form of a soul, making you unaffected by the limitations of a body. On the other hand, a normal cultivator will require at least a body with the resilience comparable to a Saint-tier artifact before they can exert the technique without any incurring any injuries. How powerful must one be to obtain a physical body on par with Saint-tier artifacts? Do you have a physical body cultivation technique that can raise one's physical body to Saint-tier? If you don't have any... is there any meaning in learning this movement technique?"

"You..."

The elder had not paid the other party much heed at the start, but after hearing those words, his expression changed.

Chapter 1042

Acknowledge Me as Your Teacher and I Will Teach You!

There were no mistakes in what the other party said at all. The first two flaws were still not much of an issue. It wasn't easy for the crux of the Unbounded Voyager to be found due to its sheer speed, and if it was utilized well in battle, it could be a powerful weapon to catching one's opponent off guard.

However, the third problem was indeed an issue that had been plaguing him for much time.

The reason he had been able to cultivate the movement technique was due to the unique bloodline that flowed through his body, granting him a body superior to the others. Even without cultivating his physical body, he could still easily execute the technique without suffering any damage. However, the same could not be said about others. The Unbounded Voyager was a powerful movement technique, but it was impossible to master without a powerful body to withstand its overwhelming prowess.

If one were to attempt to cultivate it forcefully, one might end up incurring devastating damage to one's body instead, resulting in a steep decline in one's cultivation.

However, this was a problem that only those who had started cultivating the Unbounded Voyager would understand. For the other party to be able to discern such a problem with just a glance, wasn't his eye of discernment a little too formidable? Was he really just a Nascent Saint?

On the other hand, noticing the expression on the elder's face, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

Even without utilizing his Library of Heaven's Path, he could still easily find numerous flaws in the other party's movement technique.

In fact, back when he first cultivated the Heaven's Path Movement Art, he had met with

the same problem as well. Due to the lacking resilience of his physical body, his body was nearly torn apart from the astounding speed he was traveling at.

It was even more so for the Unbounded Voyager. Moving at the speed nearly comparable to teleportation, if one's physical body didn't meet the prerequisite, one would suffer devastating damage just by executing the technique.

In the end, after everything the other party had said, the technique was only feasible when paired with exceptional zhenqi capacity and an incredibly resilient body, or else it would only end up hindering one.

Of course, if one could meet the two prerequisites for the technique, the Unbounded Voyager could become a powerful trump card in battle, allowing one to become invincible within one's cultivation realm.

As such, there was no way Zhang Xuan was going to let such a valuable technique slip through his fingers. But for him to acknowledge another man as his teacher, impossible!

"How is it? Is there a mistake in what I have said?" Smiling, Zhang Xuan turned to the elder with a glint in his eyes.

After a moment of hesitation, the elder replied, "There is indeed nothing wrong with what you have said. That is also the reason I only impart this technique to those who possess superior aptitude. The fact that you could pass through the lava, as well as approach the seal outside and destroy it, shows that your physical body has already reached an incredible level. On top of that, your ability to find this stone tablet within the allocated time limit also shows that you possess a powerful soul and a vast capacity of zhenqi. Since that is the case, you have already met the prerequisites for the cultivation of the Unbounded Voyager. The issues that you have stated aren't problems for you."

Be it the lava or the seal, they were trials that he had left behind to test those who entered the Spatial Formation. Since the other party had come this far, it meant that the other party had already met the basic requirements for the cultivation of the technique.

As such, the flaws that the other party had mentioned weren't issues either.

"I do possess the required ability to cultivate the Unbounded Voyager. It's just that... I

happen to wield the ability to improve the Unbounded Voyager and make it even stronger. Are you willing to listen?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

"Improve the Unbounded Voyager? Impossible!" The elder shook his head.

His cultivation had reached an astounding level before his death, but even so, he had still been unable to find a way to advance the Unbounded Voyager. How could the mere Nascent Saint before him possibly possess the ability to do so?

"There's no need to rush into denying the matter. Why don't we do this instead? Allow me to take a peek at the Unbounded Voyager cultivation technique, and I will point out the flaws in it for you. You can make your choice after hearing my analysis and see whether there is a mistake in it or not," Zhang Xuan said.

"I'm fine with that. In any case, I was intending to pass down the secret art to you anyway, so it's not a problem. However... I am only a fragmented soul, and the time I have is severely limited. It is probably going to be several hours before you are done reading, and I don't think that I can last until then," the elder said.

The aim of leaving behind his ancient domain was to pass down his cultivation technique to the later generations, and the young man before him was a person who had passed his trial. Naturally, he would impart the Unbounded Voyager to the young man. However, the Unbounded Voyager was an incredibly profound technique that even the most talented of people would at least require several hours before they could finish reading the entire book, let alone find the flaws in it!

As a fragmented soul, the time he had left was sorely lacking. Chances were that he would dissipate before the other party even finished browsing through the book, making it impossible for him to verify the authenticity of the other party's words.

"I don't need several hours. As long as you can allow me a look at the cultivation technique, I will be able to find the flaws in it for you within a minute!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

"A minute?" The elder stared at the young man before him doubtfully.

After a moment of hesitation, the elder flicked his wrist, and a series of words reminiscent of the Milky Way abruptly materialized in the sky.

It was the manual for the Unbounded Voyager.

Sweeping through it, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but be astonished.

Just as the other party had said, there were five dans to the technique, and each dan represented a realm. Even if he just cultivated the 1-dan to Consummation, the speed that he could travel at would increase by leaps and bounds.

That meant that he would be able to display a far greater fighting prowess than before as well.

As astonished as Zhang Xuan was, he didn't allow it to show on his face. Exhaling deeply, he turned to the elder and remarked with a light smile, "This Unbounded Voyager is indeed a formidable technique, but... if I am not mistaken, there should be nine flaws in it, right?"

"You..." Shocked by Zhang Xuan's words, the elder began trembling uncontrollably.

Back then, he had asked Kong shi to evaluate this movement technique of his, and the latter did mention that there were nine flaws with it as well. However, instead of correcting the technique for him, Kong shi had only pointed them out to him and asked him to think of a way to resolve them himself.

When he opened the ancient domain, his strength hadn't reached its peak yet, and he had yet to find a way to resolve the issues in the Unbounded Voyager. Thus, he could only leave the flawed movement technique behind.

Who would have thought that the person he was intending to pass the movement technique down to would be able to come to the same conclusion just by taking a glimpse at the manual? Wasn't his eye of discernment way too terrifying?

"Firstly, in the cultivation of the 1-dan, when driving one's zhenqi through the Bimen acupoint, it will produce an effect of temporary blindness. With a bit of bad luck, it is possible that one might even lose one's sense of sight permanently. Am I right?"

"This... You're right." After a moment of hesitation, the elder nodded.

That was exactly what Kong shi had said to him back then!

Back when he had just started cultivating the Unbounded Voyager 1-dan, he had indeed encountered signs of losing his sense of sight. It was fortunate that Kong shi had saved him then and resolved his trauma.

Zhang Xuan continued. "The reason for the occurrence of such a situation is due to the zhenqi threads passing through the Mingmou acupoint. There are some problems with the circulation pathway of the technique, and as long as the correct pathway isn't found, such a situation will occur."

The Library of Heaven's Path couldn't correct the flaws by itself and provide him with a flawless Unbounded Voyager. Nevertheless, just by pointing out the flaws alone, he could still easily win the other party's trust.

Without giving the other party any time to recover from his shock, Zhang Xuan pushed on. "The second flaw is also within the cultivation of the Unbounded Voyager 1-dan. During the cultivation process, it must be completed within a single breath. If one were to run out of zhenqi in the process and fail to push into the Shenxing acupoint, there is a good chance that one might become paralyzed for life..."

The crux to the incredible speed of the Unbounded Voyager lay in the opening of the Shenxing acupoint.

However, the acupoint was located at the center of one's feet, and it was an extraordinarily difficult acupoint to open. It was highly demanding on the purity and quantity of zhenqi one harnessed. The slightest deviation that occurred in this stage could result in full body paralysis!

Even though he had been spared from that unfortunate outcome back when he was cultivating it, a couple of students he had accepted later on weren't as lucky as him. Instead of mastering the technique, they had ended up losing their ability to walk instead.

All along, he had thought that it was due to his students' weak body and lacking zhenqi. He had thought that, as long he could find someone who possessed a bloodline as powerful as his, the problem could be averted entirely. However, at that moment, the young man was saying the very same words that Kong shi had told him back then, and this left him thinking that the matter might not have been as simple as he thought it was.

"The third flaw is in the Unbounded Voyager 2-dan. While cultivating that realm, the driving of one's zhenqi through that point could lead to the breeding of Inner Demons..."

"The fourth flaw lies in the 3-dan..."

"The fifth flaw..."

...

In a single breath, Zhang Xuan spilled out the nine flaws in the Unbounded Voyager in detail.

These were all reflected in the Library of Heaven's Path, so he only had to read them out accordingly.

"...and these are the nine flaws that I have identified. Is there any mistake with my analysis?"

"T-this..." The elder trembled uncontrollably as he retracted the words in the sky before nodding. "There is no mistake at all. Your analysis is correct!"

At that moment, there was no word that could possibly describe the immense shock he was feeling.

The manual for the Unbounded Voyager consisted of over ten thousand words, and the meaning behind them was extremely profound as well. Even he would have needed several hours before he could fully make sense out of the entire manual. Yet, with a simple glance, the other party had been able to point out the flaws in it, and it was exactly the same as what Kong shi had said back then. His eye of discernment was truly frightening!

His talent was nowhere beneath that of Kong shi's!

"Do you believe that I can improve the Unbounded Voyager for you now?" Zhang Xuan said.

The elder was conflicted for a short moment before eventually nodding. "...I do."

Judging from how the other party was able to point out the flaws in the Unbounded Voyager with just a glance, it wouldn't be too difficult for him to correct them and bring it a step closer to perfection.

"Good. Right, there is something that I want to ask you. Did a group of master teachers

pass by this area two years ago? May I know if they are still living?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"There was indeed a group of master teachers who passed by this stone tablet two years ago. However, as they didn't find the way out of the Unbounded World in the allocated time, I didn't impart my secret art to them, simply sending them away. However, they didn't listen to my advice and chose to continue onward. As this soul of mine is bound here, I am not too sure about how they fared in the later trials," the elder replied.

Despite being a soul fragment of the ancient domain's master, he was effectively no different from a puppet that had been left behind to stand guard in the Unbounded World. Anything beyond this trial was outside his scope of authority, so he had no way of peeking and learning about it.

"Alright then." Hearing the explanation, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and nodded.

He had thought that he could receive some vital news from the other party, but it seemed like he could only take one step at a time.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan was about to turn around and leave when the elder behind him suddenly spoke up. "Since you know the way to perfecting the Unbounded Voyager, can you share it with me?"

This question had been plaguing him for the longest time. As he had been left behind in the Unbounded World before these problems could be resolved, he had never had a chance to learn of the solutions to resolving the problems.

While the time he had left was limited, if he could learn of the correct cultivation technique before his dissipation, his life wouldn't have been spent in vain.

If this final regret of his could be resolved, he wouldn't mind even if he were to dissipate then and there!

Halting in his footsteps, Zhang Xuan turned around and asked, "You wish to know how to resolve the flaws of the Unbounded Voyager?"

"That's right!" The elder nodded. "If you can enlighten me, I will be extremely grateful to you!"

Since the other party had been able to see through the flaws in his cultivation

technique with just a single look, he dared not pull his weight and say words about how he was going to impart the Unbounded Voyager to the other party anymore.

Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back, and an indomitable aura burst forth from him, as if a deity that had descended from the heavens.

"Acknowledge me as your teacher, and I will impart it to you!"

Chapter 1043

Field of Lightning

"..."

The elder staggered. For a moment there, he nearly dissipated on the spot.

The reason he had left his fragmented soul behind was to accept new students so as to pass down his secret art to the later generations, not to acknowledge other people as his teacher!

Yet, not only did he fail to score himself his student, the other party was even intending to take him on as a student. The immense frustration that he felt left him feeling like he was going to explode on the spot.

But thinking back, he was the person who had said 'If you wish to obtain my heritage, you have to join my lineage. Otherwise, how can I impart my secret art to you?'

Now that he wanted the other party to impart the perfected Unbounded Voyager to him, it went without saying that the same rules should apply as well. Why should the other party teach him otherwise?

"Alright, I was being too superficial then..." Shaking his head, the elder decided to ask no more. Turning his gaze to Zhang Xuan, he said, "The true ancient domain lies beyond me, and you will face far greater danger than this. I wish you the best in your journey."

After saying those words, the silhouette of the elder began to fade.

Normally, the other party should have been able to maintain his existence for some time. However, after suffering the heavy blow from Zhang Xuan, the other party found himself unable to hold on any longer.

Hu!

The elder vanished from sight, and cracks swiftly crept across the stone tablet before

him.

Kacha, kacha!

In the blink of an eye, it had already collapsed into a pile of rubble on the ground.

"You haven't told me what your name is..." Not expecting the other party to vanish so abruptly, Zhang Xuan was dazed.

In truth, when he said that he could correct the flaws of the Unbounded Voyager and improve it, it had been nothing more than a ploy to lure the other party into taking out the manual. The movement techniques that he had collected thus far were simply too weak; it was impossible to compile them with such an advanced technique.

As such, even though Zhang Xuan could easily point out the flaws regarding the Unbounded Voyager, it was impossible for him to correct them.

Seeing how earnestly the other party was seeking guidance from him, he had no choice but to use the other party's words against him. Who would have thought that the other party would vanish shortly after he finished saying those words?

He had received the other party's Unbounded Voyager manual, but in the end, he realized that he didn't even know the other party's name.

Facing the shattered stone tablet before him, Zhang Xuan bowed deeply. "Elder, thank you for your movement technique. I will surely bring it glory so as to not let you down!"

No matter what, the other party deserved an earnest bow from him.

This Unbounded Voyager might be powerful, but I am still unable to cultivate it yet.

After paying his respects to the elder, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the movement technique that he had just obtained, and he couldn't help but shake his head helplessly.

His zhenqi and physical body did meet the required mark, allowing him to execute the technique without his zhenqi running dry or his physical body being strained beyond its limit. However, there was another issue that Zhang Xuan was particularly concerned with... there were simply too many flaws with the technique!

He really couldn't bring himself to practice such a flawed technique.

Just the flaw in the first dan of the movement technique could potentially deprive him of his vision. He didn't wish to become blind from practicing this technique.

It seemed like he would really have to find higher tier movement technique manuals to compile together with the Unbounded Voyager so as to perfect it when he got out.

In any case, the Heaven's Path Movement Art was sufficient for the time being, so there was no need for him to take the risk.

Alright, I should return first. Since the sound of the breeze has stopped, they should have all recovered from their trance too. I should head back to find them now.

Putting aside the Unbounded Voyager for the time being, Zhang Xuan turned around and returned in the direction he had come from.

The other expedition members had been under the control of the demonic tune previously, but with the disappearance of the sound of the breeze, they should have recovered from their trance.

Along the way, he took back the various formations he had set up on the way to point out the direction for him, and not too long later, he finally returned to where he had parted with Wu shi and the others. Taking a look at the surroundings, he couldn't help but frown grimly.

There was not a person in sight, but the entire area was a mess. Innumerable depressions could be seen all around, and fresh blood was scattered here and there. It seemed as if a ferocious fight had just happened in the area.

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly. *What happened?*

Wu shi and the others were Saint 4-dan experts. What kind of danger could they have encountered that would result in such an intense battle, such that they wouldn't even have the time to leave a message or the sort for him?

Eye of Insight!

Knowing that the expedition team might have met with danger, Zhang Xuan dared not hesitate. He swiftly scanned his surroundings carefully, and before long, a faint trail

appeared before his eyes.

Follow it!

Zhang Xuan immediately tracked the trail with hastened footsteps.

The Otherworldly Demons?

Not too long later, he stumbled by yet another battlefield. This time, not only was there the blood of humans, there were also the carcasses of two slaughtered Otherworldly Demons.

Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in alarm. *This is bad... *

It might have taken some time for others to analyze the carcasses to deduce the power level of the Otherworldly Demons before their deaths, but as one who possessed the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan could do it with just a swift glance. He could tell that the two deceased Otherworldly Demons were Saint 3-dan experts!

With such strength, the duo could be considered experts even among the Qingtian royalty.

Hu!

With a thought, the Violetleaf King appeared before Zhang Xuan.

"Do you recognize these two fellows?" Zhang Xuan asked gravely.

Based on previous experiences, it was apparent that the Qingtian royalty had set their eyes upon the ancient domain as well. Thus, it was safe to assume that any Otherworldly Demons that appeared were related to the Qingtian royalty.

The Violetleaf King examined the two carcasses in front of him for a brief moment before turning to Zhang Xuan to report. "Reporting to Young Master, I don't know those two. However... judging from their features, they are most likely the subordinates of the Stoneleaf King!"

"Stoneleaf King?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

That was the Otherworldly Demon King who was ranked fourth of the Five Upper

Kings!

"The Stoneleaf King is known for his superior physical body. When his cultivation technique is active, his entire body will gain toughness comparable to the strongest granite in the world, granting him foolproof defense! Considering how the skin of these two Otherworldly Demons is dry and rough, it appears that they have practiced a similar cultivation technique to that of the Stoneleaf King, so it is very likely that they are his subordinates," the Violetleaf King analyzed.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Back when he examined the duo with the Eye of Insight, he did notice that their skin was a little cracked and grayish, reminiscent of a stone. He had thought that it might have been a result of the poor environment they had grown up in, resulting in the aged appearance of their skin. However, judging from the Violetleaf King's words, it appeared that it was the result of the practicing of some kind of unique cultivation technique.

After understanding what was going on, the Violetleaf King remarked, "The Stoneleaf King is a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, and he boasts indomitable physical prowess. Even I dare not stand up against him as an enemy. I fear that it will be extremely dangerous for Wu shi and the others to face him!"

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little apprehensive at those words. Not daring to waste any time, he hurriedly followed the trail forward.

Hong long long!

Proceeding forward for a while longer, a rumble abruptly sounded from the front. Gazing ahead, Zhang Xuan saw that the area in front of him was filled with dark, ominous clouds. Innumerable streaks of lightning flashed furiously across the area, and the deafening rumbling of thunder roared ceaselessly in the air.

The Spatial Formation they were in had conditions that deeply resembled those of the external world. There were varying seasons and weather conditions, and naturally, there was spring lightning 1 as well.

Seeing that the trail led into the field of lightning, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but frown.
*They are in there... *

The spring lightning before him was extremely fearsome; just a brief moment of carelessness could easily result in one being struck to death. Under normal circumstances, he would surely have fled as far away as possible, not daring to get close at all.

Yet, the expedition team had actually dared to step into such treacherous lands. It seemed like the danger they were facing was far greater than he had imagined.

I really should have left the Golden Origin Cauldron with them, Zhang Xuan thought in self-reproach.

He thought that the only danger that the crowd would face in the Unbounded Formation was from the sound of the breeze, so he didn't bother leaving the Golden Origin Cauldron behind to protect them. Yet, who would have thought that they would end up encountering Otherworldly Demons?

"Young Master, the lightning is very dangerous. Are you really intending to enter?" The Violetleaf King couldn't help but cower at the field of lightning.

"You should enter the Myriad Anthive Nest for the time being!" Knowing that an additional member would just mean an additional target for the lightning to strike, Zhang Xuan had the Violetleaf King return to the Myriad Anthive Nest. Just as he was about to step into the field of lightning, a thought surfaced in his mind, and he halted.

He quickly searched for a discreet area where he could hide at and sat down cross-legged. After ensuring that there was no one in the vicinity, he drew his soul out from his glabella.

If the expedition team was truly being pursued by the Otherworldly Demons, he had to get to them quickly to save them. If he attempted to enter with his physical body, there was a good chance that the lightning could be drawn to him, resulting in his advancement being slowed significantly. Thus, it would be much safer and faster to head in with his soul.

His soul was intangible and possessed no attribute, so as long as he didn't intentionally show himself, the lightning wouldn't be able to notice him.

Zhang Xuan swiftly stowed his physical body into the Myriad Anthive Nest as well before placing it into his storage ring. After which, holding onto the storage ring with his soul energy, he dived into the field of lightning. Tracing the trail on the ground with

his Eye of Insight, he swiftly proceeded forward.

The trail had mostly been erased by the force of the lightning, making it impossible for even a 7-star high-tier master teacher like Wu shi to trace it. It was only due to Zhang Xuan's extraordinarily sharp eyes that he was still able to follow it.

After flying for a while, Zhang Xuan felt a disturbance in the spiritual energy ahead of him. The lightning streaks seemed to concentrate right ahead, and amid their thunderous roars, he could barely make out the din of combat.

Rushing forward, Zhang Xuan soon found an extremely ancient city at the very center of the lightning. Within the city, the lightning seemed to have weakened considerably.

Two groups were currently clashing with one another intensely within the ancient city. Wu shi and the others were seated cross-legged on the ground, their faces pale from the injuries they had sustained. On the other hand, there were eight ferocious-looking Otherworldly Demons surrounding them.

"Violeleaf King, is the Stoneleaf King among the group there?"

For Wu shi and the others to be left in such a state, their opponent was definitely no pushover. Knowing that he couldn't act recklessly at such a moment, Zhang Xuan hurriedly communicated with the Violeleaf King in the Myriad Anthive Nest in hopes of obtaining more intelligence regarding the enemy forces.

After taking a look, the Violeleaf King replied telepathically, "Young Master, the Stoneleaf King isn't among the group. The eight Otherworldly Demons over there are likely his subordinates. Even so, they boast superior defense and are unafraid of death, making them fearsome adversaries."

"The Stoneleaf King isn't there?"

Hearing that the Stoneleaf King wasn't amid the group, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He quickly slipped his soul back into the Myriad Anthive Nest and returned back to his body before silently reappearing on the spot.

He was the only reinforcement the expedition team had at the moment. If he wanted to save them, he would have to defeat all of the Otherworldly Demons in a single sweep. Otherwise, if the enemy were allowed time to regroup and encircle them once more, he could very well be placed in a very dangerous position.

Zhang Xuan summoned the Golden Origin Cauldron out and instructed it grimly, "Ding Ding, you will be attacking with me in a moment."

"Young Master, rest assured. I will reduce that bunch to cinders!" the Golden Origin Cauldron declared confidently.

It had always loved fighting, but it was a pity that it didn't have many opportunities to do so. This was a rare chance for it to go all out, so how could it let such an opportunity slip through its fingers?

"Alright. Move!"

Identifying the best possible timing to strike, Zhang Xuan commanded the Golden Origin Cauldron before dashing forward.

Executing the Heaven's Path Movement Art, he charged right up furiously and rammed forcefully into an Otherworldly Demon.

His physical body was currently on par with Saint low-tier artifacts. The sheer force he harnessed in his ram was far greater than the might of any weapon that he could wield.

Peng!

The Otherworldly Demon that he struck was immediately killed on the spot. Just as Zhang Xuan was about to turn around and launch an attack toward the next enemy, he suddenly heard cries of agony behind him.

****Ahhhh!****

Turning around, he saw that the Golden Origin Cauldron, with its size enlarged to its maximum, had fallen down upon the remaining seven Otherworldly Demons, crushing them into meat paste.

Even in the moment before their deaths, the seven Otherworldly Demons had dazed looks on their faces, not knowing what was happening at all.

That is too savage.

Stunned, Zhang Xuan didn't even notice that his mouth was wide open.

He had thought that it was already very formidable that he could ram an Otherworldly Demon to death with his body, but who could have known that Golden Origin Cauldron would top his feat? It was as if what he had done was nothing more than child's play.

Chapter 1044

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu

Several minutes earlier...

Seated on the floor, the pale-faced Wu shi said, "I never thought that I, Wu Rufeng, would end up dying under the encirclement of a bunch of Saint 3-dan Otherworldly Demons."

In this moment, his confident eyes were filled with nothing but despondence.

Shortly after the demonic tune was finally dispelled, they encountered this bunch of Otherworldly Demons.

Under the torture of the demonic tunes, their expedition team had been severely depleted of their zhenqi and stamina, such that even walking was difficult for them. In their current state, there was no way they could withstand the ferocious assault of the Otherworldly Demons.

They had been left with no choice but to try their best to flee while fending off the Otherworldly Demon. Through pushing himself to his limit, Wu shi had managed to slay two of the Otherworldly Demons, but in the end, he had ended up being severely wounded by a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon shortly after.

Even though they had already prepared themselves to face death in the exploration of the ancient domain, they hadn't even met the shadows of Zhang Yinqiu and the others yet! How could he die when he hadn't even managed to accomplish anything yet? More importantly, as a 7-star high-tier master teacher, he felt like it was a great humiliation to die at the hands of the Otherworldly Demons.

"If we really can't hold on any further, let's just explode our cultivation. I don't want to die and have my corpse tarnished in their hands!"

If his corpse were to be used by the Otherworldly Demons as a tribute for them to gain even more power, there was no way he would be able to rest in peace.

Instead of being humiliated in such a manner, he would rather implode himself, and perhaps, he might be able to bring some enemies down with him, bringing some value to his death.

With gritted teeth, the rest of the crowd nodded in agreement. "Very well!"

The ones present in the area came from various walks in life—master teachers, combat masters, and formation masters. However, they shared a common trait; they were all humans.

"Farewell, my friends and family. Farewell, the Master Teacher Pavilion. Farewell, mankind. I apologize for being unable to accomplish my mission."

Sighing deeply, the crowd was just about to give up their struggles and explode their cultivation when they suddenly saw a figure heading toward them.

"Principal Zhang?"

Upon seeing the other party's appearance, everyone couldn't help but clench their fists tightly, and their faces reddened in agitation.

They had thought that they were doomed, but who would have thought that Principal Chang would arrive at the very last moment?

Without utilizing any techniques, Zhang Xuan charged right into the fray. With just a single ram, he had already knocked an Otherworldly Demon into meat paste. The Golden Origin Cauldron was even more formidable. It expanded until it was several dozen meters wide and plummeted down upon the Otherworldly Demons from the sky, smashing seven of them in a single breath.

The Saint intermediate-tier Golden Origin Cauldron wielded fighting prowess on par with a Saint 4-dan pinnacle cultivator, and the Otherworldly Demons surrounding them were merely at Saint 3-dan. There was no way they could possibly withstand its strength.

"Don't kill them fir..." Zhang Xuan tried to stop the Golden Origin Cauldron, but before he could finish his words, he realized that the group of Otherworldly Demons were already all dead. Thus, the rest of the words ended up being choked in his mouth, unable to be spoken.

He had been planning on keeping one of them alive for interrogation, but who could have known that the Golden Origin Cauldron would move so quickly? Barely after he had defeated his first one, the other party had already ended the remaining ones, not allowing him any time to stop it at all.

"Forget it..." Zhang Xuan shook his head before walking up to the expedition team. "How are you all feeling?"

With his eye of discernment, he could tell that their injuries were rather significant. It would take quite a bit of effort to heal them.

"Thank you for saving our lives..."

After expressing their gratitude to Zhang Xuan, the members of the expedition team hurriedly took out recovery pills from their storage rings and swallowed them.

The injuries they had sustained were so severe that they could only afford to utter a word of thanks before rushing off to recuperate.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan knew that they had their own recovery means, so he chose not to interfere too much either. Gazing at the crowd from his position, his frown couldn't help but gradually deepen with impatience.

Wu shi was the first one to recover to a decent extent from his injuries, and he slowly opened his eyes.

It was due to them being assaulted by the Otherworldly Demons while they were in a deeply weakened state that they had fallen so easily.

Had the expedition team been at its full strength, they would have been able to deal with the enemy easily even if there were two Saint 4-dan experts on the other side.

"What happened?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"It's like this. Not too long after Principal Zhang left, we were encircled by the Otherworldly Demon..." Wu shi began going through the situation back then in detail.

After learning of the ins and outs of the situation, Zhang Xuan realized that the Otherworldly Demons who had left the expedition team fleeing frantically weren't as scary as he had imagined, and he heaved a sigh of relief. At the same time, he couldn't

help but ask, "Where is Luo shi? Why isn't she with you?"

Zhang Xuan had been looking out for her ever since he arrived, but it was apparent that Luo Ruoxin wasn't among the expedition team. That was also the reason he was feeling deeply worried.

"As soon as the demonic tune vanished, Luo shi seemed to have noticed something, so she left the expedition team to take a look. As for exactly where she went, we aren't too sure either," Wu shi replied.

Luo Ruoxin had left right after the demonic tune vanished, and just barely two minutes after her disappearance, the Otherworldly Demons had suddenly come to attack. If she had been around, perhaps the expedition team wouldn't have faced such a crushing defeat.

"You aren't too sure either?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

She couldn't have encountered Otherworldly Demons in the midst of her journey either, could she? Even the entire expedition team had nearly been wiped out from facing them, so how could she possibly withstand their prowess alone?

"Wait a moment. You said that a Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon attacked you earlier, where is that fellow now?"

Earlier, Wu shi had mentioned that there was a powerful Otherworldly Demon that had severely wounded him earlier. Otherwise, with the powerful Wu shi holding the fort, they wouldn't have lost so tragically. If Zhang Xuan's guess wasn't off, that Saint 4-dan Otherworldly Demon should have been the Stoneleaf King. But... why wasn't he here at the moment?

Could it be that he had found the whereabouts of Luo Ruoxin and gone off to pursue her?

This time, it was Guild Leader Han who replied. "Shortly after entering this ancient city, he gave his subordinates some instructions and left the area hurriedly. It seemed like he was going to find some kind of treasure hidden within the field of lightning urgently."

After a moment of recuperation, Guild Leader Han had recovered a fair bit as well. While the wounds he was carrying at the moment were still rather severe, he was out

of danger for the time being.

He left to find some kind of treasure? Anything is fine as long as he's not going after Luo Ruoxin. Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan turned to the Golden Origin Cauldron and instructed, "Ding Ding, stay here to protect the others. I am going to look for Luo shi first."

No matter what the Stoneleaf King was up to, Zhang Xuan's priorities were clear. There was nothing more important than Luo Ruoxin's safety to him.

After leaving the expedition team, Zhang Xuan swiftly left the field of lightning in his soul form and searched around the area. Not too long later, he managed to find a trail.

Following the trail, he eventually found a young lady standing before a shattered stone tablet with a contemplative frown etched on her forehead.

Zhang Xuan hurried forward to ask, "Are you fine?"

Upon seeing him, Luo Ruoxin chuckled and replied, "I am fine. What's wrong? Did something happen?"

"Wu shi and the others met with some trouble..." Zhang Xuan quickly filled Luo Ruoxin in on the happenings in her absence.

"They came under the attack of the Otherworldly Demons?" Luo Ruoxin harrumphed coldly. "Those scoundrels! They must have followed us in."

As the seal outside had been broken, the door could no longer keep anyone out. The Otherworldly Demons had probably gotten into the ancient domain by following them discreetly.

Zhang Xuan nodded as well.

Luo Ruoxin pointed at the rubble in front of her and asked, "Are you the one who destroyed the stone tablet?"

"This..." Zhang Xuan was slightly embarrassed.

While he hadn't destroyed the stone tablet with his own hands, its destruction could be attributed very directly to him. It wouldn't be too far-fetched to say that he was the

culprit even.

"There is something weird with the stone tablet. Did you realize that it is made of the same material as the inscribed cliff face on the Saint Ascension Platform? Furthermore, this Spatial Formation deeply resembles the folded space that Kong shi left his scroll in back then," Luo Ruoxin said contemplatively.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Now that the other party mentioned it, he realized that there was indeed a deep resemblance between the two.

Similar materials being used could be attributed to the close proximity between the Saint Ascension Platform to this ancient domain. The cliff face was indeed a material that boasted a greater longevity compared to the others, so it wasn't too surprising for the master of the ancient domain to select it. But the resemblance between both spaces was too much to pass off as a mere coincidence.

Could this ancient domain... really be related to Kong shi? Zhang Xuan thought.

There were quite a few people who had deduced that there might be a connection between the two since they were rather close with one another, but due to the silent restraint on the discussion of Kong shi's affairs, they dared not talk too much about it.

"No, that's not it... I was the one who activated the stone tablet, and the elder who appeared wasn't Kong shi..." Zhang Xuan said.

The elder who appeared earlier had claimed that he was the master of the ancient domain, but his appearance and gestures were completely different to Kong shi's!

Hearing that it was Zhang Xuan who had activated the stone tablet, Luo Ruoxin hurriedly turned her gaze over. "What was that elder's name?"

"His name? He didn't tell me... However, he did impart a movement technique to me that goes by the name of... Unbounded Voyager!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Unbounded Voyager? Could it be..." Luo Ruoxin's eyes lit up as a thought came to her mind.

Noting Luo Ruoxin's reaction, Zhang Xuan asked, "You have heard of that movement

technique before?"

"If the movement technique you have been given is truly Unbounded Voyager, then the person you met was most likely Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!" Luo Ruoxin replied.

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "I think I have heard of that name before... Wait! He is the expert who created the seal in the Subterranean Gallery beneath the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!"

Back then, to repair the seal, Zhang Xuan had compiled a book on the seal, and from it, he had learned that it had been created by an expert who went by the name of Qiu Wu.

Could it be that... the elder who intended to accept him as his student was a fragmented soul of that expert?

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shudder at the notion, and cold sweat broke out all over his body.

An expert that was able of creating a seal that even 9-star master teachers were incapable of breaking open... And he actually tried to take the other party in as his student...

How could he have been so brazen?

It was fortunate that the elder hadn't gotten angry over the matter, or else, even as a fragmented soul, the other party would still have been more than capable of destroying him.

"Un. Ancient Sage Qiu Wu possesses a deep understanding regarding the laws of space. Most of the seals to the otherworldly battlefields were set up by him!" Luo Ruoxin nodded.

"While Ancient Sage Qiu Wu wasn't Kong shi's student, he was one of Kong shi's staunch followers. Possessing an unfathomable cultivation, he stood beside Kong shi no matter where the latter went. On the surface, it might have seemed as if their relationship was that between a master and a servant, but in truth, they were close like brothers. Even the 72 Sages who inherited Kong shi's heritage had to respectfully address him as Senior Uncle Qiu Wu 1 !"

"Senior Uncle Qiu Wu?"

"Indeed. Qiu Wu has devoted his life to following Kong shi, and back then, in order to fend off the offense of the Otherworldly Demons, he used his own body as the catalyst for a seal so as to stop the enemy in their tracks, thus buying precious time for the human race. Among the respected predecessors of the Master Teacher Pavilion, his contribution is definitely ranked within the top five!"

Admiration and respect couldn't help but surface in Luo Ruoxin's eyes as she spoke of Qiu Wu. "That is the reason many of the later generations respected him deeply. Putting everything aside, just Pavilion Master Gou of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion is one of his most fervent fans... Zhang shi, what's wrong?"

At this point, Luo Ruoxin turned her gaze over and noticed that, at some point in time, Zhang Xuan had collapsed weakly to the ground with a look of despair on his face. It was as if someone had slapped him hard on his face, and he looked so vexed that he was about to cry.

Chapter 1045

Soul Tempering Through Lightning

"It's fine..."

Zhang Xuan struggled to his feet, but his entire body still felt limp and weak.

He had actually tried to make an expert like Ancient Sage Qiu Wu acknowledge him as his teacher. It was fortunate that no one else knew, or else Wu Shi and the others might just have pummeled him to death!

"Just a moment ago, I sensed a powerful fragmented soul that harnessed an ancient aura in the area, so I hurriedly left the expedition team to rush over. However, it abruptly vanished before I could reach here. It turns out that it was Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. Have you mastered his Unbounded Voyager yet?" Luo Ruoxin asked.

"I haven't learned it yet..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You haven't learned it? Well, I have read some records regarding the Unbounded Voyager, and it appears that the movement technique is highly demanding on one's physical body and zhenqi. It is not something that can be mastered easily, so there's no need for you to rush into it." Noting the crestfallen look on Zhang Xuan's face, Luo Ruoxin thought that he was feeling down because he hadn't managed to master it, so she attempted to console him.

"Un." Knowing that there was no way he could explain the matter either, Zhang Xuan nodded with a bitter smile.

Luo Ruoxin continued. "The Unbounded Voyager can definitely be ranked within the top three movement techniques on the Master Teacher Continent, so you must take caution when using it publicly. Otherwise, if others were to notice it, you might end up bringing trouble upon yourself."

While master teachers were bound by rules, sometimes, in face of an unparalleled treasure, greed could become a sufficiently powerful force for them to cast aside their morals.

Using the current Zhang Xuan as an example, it was not that there wasn't anyone who was tempted to obtain his cultivation technique and battle techniques, considering the incredible fighting prowess he wielded. The only reason no one had done so thus far was due to their fear of 'Yang shi' and the Master Teacher Pavilion!

Had it not been for 'Yang shi's' occasional appearances reminding everyone that he had the backing of a fearsomely powerful teacher, he could have already been taken down long ago and forced to spill all of the secrets he had.

Such was the case for the Unbounded Voyager, too.

Not only was it powerful, it was also a part of the legendary Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage. Once news that Zhang Xuan was in possession of it spread... perhaps master teachers might still hold themselves back, in consideration of their standing, but the same couldn't be said about the other unaffiliated cultivators or those from other occupations. It was for this very reason that Zhang Xuan had been so fixated on the idea of maintaining a low profile.

As the old adage goes, better safe than sorry.

"Thank you for your reminder, I will take note of it!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Un. Since Ancient Sage Qiu Wu has appeared once, it is very likely that we will have many more opportunities to meet him later on. For the time being, let's hurry back to where Wu shi and the others are. If the Stoneleaf King you spoke of goes back to them, they will be in grave danger," Luo Ruoxin said.

"Yes, you're right. We will still have plenty of chances to meet him in the future. Alright, let's go!"

Zhang Xuan was still feeling deeply guilty over the words that he had spoken. Upon hearing that Ancient Sage Qiu Wu would very likely appear again in the future, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Indeed, the elder whose dissipation he had induced was just a fragmented soul. They were bound to meet more as they travel through the ancient domain. At the very most, he would just have to apologize to him later on.

The urgent matter at hand wasn't for him to be conflicted over such trivialities but to advance deeper into the ancient domain, find the old principal, and foil the plans of

the Otherworldly Demons. He would only be truly letting down Ancient Sage Qiu Wu if he allowed the Otherworldly Demons' ploys in the ancient domain to succeed.

Without any hesitation, the duo began heading toward the field of lightning.

Hong long long!

Before they could even come close to the field of lightning, they could already hear the domineering thunder roaring in the distance, as if some kind of powerful force was trying to rip the world into two.

Soon, arriving before the field of lightning, Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed.

The field of lightning had been plenty frightening when he first arrived as well, but the sight before him at that moment was a true catastrophe.

To make a comparison, the field of lightning had intensified from a drizzle into a heavy downpour.

Countless streaks of lightning assaulted the land relentlessly with frightening concentration, turning the ground pitch black. It was as if someone had carried out an entire stretch of hell and shifted it here, leaving others to keep a distance away from it fearfully.

What happened? Why did the lightning suddenly run amok? Zhang Xuan was deeply anxious and worried.

Wu shi and the others hadn't recovered from their injuries yet! In face of such a powerful lightning storm, they could very well be in danger!

Just what could have happened for the relatively calmer field of lightning to abruptly go berserk?

"How do we enter?" Zhang Xuan frowned in vexation.

When the lightning had been sparser, he had still been able to evade them easily using his soul. But with the lightning becoming so frighteningly concentrated, drowning the entire area, no matter how fast his reaction speed was, there was no way he could avoid every single one of the lightning! He would be reduced to cinders before he could even get in!

"The lightning is far too concentrated; it won't be feasible for us to charge in forcefully." Luo Ruoxin's eyebrows were also knitted together.

She was also unable to think of a workable solution to get into the field of lightning at the moment.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before turning to Luo Ruoxin and saying, "You should enter the Myriad Anthive Nest for the moment. I will try to think of a way to get through the field of lightning."

She had been with him when the Myriad Anthive Queen consumed the folded space at the Saint Ascension Platform, so it was no secret to her.

After slight hesitation, Luo Ruoxin nodded. "Alright then. You have to be careful."

"Un."

After having Luo Ruoxin enter the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan attempted the same ploy he had utilized before. He drew his soul out from his body and charged in.

Before such violent lightning, it wouldn't take long for even his Saint low-tier physical body to be reduced to a lump of meat. It would be far safer for him to enter in his soul form.

Due to the intangible nature of souls, it could ward off most of the energy from the lightning, thus minimizing the danger that one would face from it.

Hong long!

As soon as Zhang Xuan entered, several bolts of lightning immediately fell from the sky and struck his soul squarely. In an instant, his soul stiffened entirely, and a piercing pain threatened to tear him apart.

"Yowch..." Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth forcefully to endure the excruciating pain his soul was put under.

It was fortunate that he cultivated the Heaven's Path Soul Art, so his soul was devoid of the yin attribute. Otherwise, considering the vulnerability of the yin attribute to lightning, his soul might have just dissipated then and there.

Nevertheless, as if he had been sentenced to death by a thousand cuts 1 , he felt like innumerable steel needles were piercing into his soul. The sheer pain he was put under pushed his mind to its very limit, and he felt as if he could faint on the spot.

At this rate, I think that I will die of pain before I can persevere up to where Wu shi and the others are, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

He had strong mental resilience, granting him great tolerance to pain. Nevertheless, the excruciating pain from the lightning striking down on him relentlessly still left him feeling as if he would faint at any moment.

He was still a distance away from the ancient city where Wu shi and the others were. He really couldn't imagine himself moving his soul over under such circumstances.

I don't have a choice at the moment. I will have to deal with the pain no matter how unbearable it is. If I am already in such a state despite my soul form, Wu shi and the others must be in an even worse position than I am.] Zhang Xuan clenched his jaws tightly.

Wu shi and the others were currently located at the very heart of the field of lightning, and there was no doubt that there were in grave danger at the moment. He had to save them as quickly as possible.

Thus, fueled by determination, he continued trudging forward.

Pilipala!

Despite the intangible nature of souls, the lightning that fell from the sky was simply too concentrated, making it impossible for him to avoid it altogether. He had advanced less than a hundred meters into the field of lightning thus far, but his soul had already been struck at least five hundred times by the lightning.

Gradually, Zhang Xuan found his mind withering away under the immense pain. Knowing that it was impossible for him to force a path ahead, he was just about to give up and leave for the time being to decide on another course of action when he suddenly noticed something, and his eyes widened in astonishment.

T-this...

Overwhelming agitation struck Zhang Xuan abruptly, causing even his soul to distort

from the sheer intensity of his emotions.

The Innate Fetal Poison actually fears the Power of Lightning! It is being forced to congregate at one location, Zhang Xuan thought in shock as he looked inwardly at the current state of his soul.

That incomparably haughty Innate Fetal Poison, which had wreaked havoc in his soul previously, was currently gathered together, seemingly apprehensive of the Power of Lightning that had gathered around his soul. It was shaking fearfully by the corner, not daring to move in the least.

The amalgamation of his soul essence with Wei Ruyan's had granted his soul properties reminiscent of the Poison Soul Constitution, and that had helped him to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison considerably, forcing the latter to lie low for the time being. However, he knew that this was only a temporary measure. Given sufficient time, the Innate Fetal Poison would still find an opportunity to strike back.

But... at this moment, the Innate Fetal Poison was so frightened by the Power of Lightning that it had withdrawn entirely from the other portions of his soul, congregating together in just one location. If that was the case... was it possible for him to use the Power of Lightning to destroy the Innate Fetal Poison once and for all?

If he were to succeed, he could permanently rid himself of the ticking time bomb within him, and long gone would be the days where he lived fearfully for his life!

Since you are frightened of lightning, let me absorb some more and give you a good treat!

With that thought in mind, Zhang Xuan forcefully suppressed the vertigo he was experiencing to calm his mind.

After which, he began to actively absorb the lightning that he had been trying so hard to ward off a moment ago.

Since I am able to absorb even the heat of the lava, the same should apply for lightning as well.

If the heat contained within the lava could be used to refine his soul, perhaps lightning could have the same effects as well...

Gathering his concentration, he opened up all of the acupoints throughout his body and began driving the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Even though he still didn't possess the Half-Saint Heaven's Path Soul Art yet, the Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art was still sufficient for him to utilize the surrounding lightning to refine his soul, making it even more condensed and heavier.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Drawn in by Zhang Xuan, the Power of Lightning gathered around his soul in the form of innumerable little lightning snakes.

It had only been a stabbing pain before, but at that moment, he felt as if someone had plunged his soul into a wok of boiling oil; there was not a single portion of his soul that wasn't hurting.

" Ahh! "

Feeling as if a devastating force was ripping through his body, Zhang Xuan let loose a deafening bellow.

If it had been anyone else, they would have long succumbed. However, as a practitioner of the Heaven's Path cultivation techniques, his physical body and soul carried the inviolable disposition of the heavens, granting him superior resilience to the forces of nature. On top of that, his transcendental state of mind also helped his mind to remain composed and rational before the immense pain, thus allowing him to forcefully retain his consciousness.

Geji! Geji!

Driving the little lightning snakes through the meridians of his soul via the Heaven's Path Soul Art, Zhang Xuan soon realized, to his delight, that despite the unbearable pain he was suffering, the Innate Fetal Poison had been forced to congregate closer and closer together, seemingly being backed into a corner, and the size of his soul was also compressed further as well.

With just a single circulation of the little lightning snakes, the height of his soul had been reduced from 8 meters to 7.9 meters.

Not only so, after absorbing the Power of Lightning, he realized that his resistance to lightning had also been boosted significantly. The penetrating pain he felt seemed to feel a little less unbearable compared to before.

Continue!

Zhang Xuan knew that, if he couldn't withstand the lightning, it was very likely that he would pass out first before he could save Wu shi and the others. Thus, he decided to cultivate his soul first.

Hu hu hu!

The raging lightning continuously seeped into his soul, condensing his soul further and further.

It was still unbearable at the start, but as his soul absorbed the Power of Lightning and grew stronger, the excruciating pain caused by the lightning also began to dull.

Hong long!

After some time, with a furious roar, his soul advanced from Half-Saint to Nascent Saint, and its height also reduced from eight meters to seven meters.

Alright, I should head over to save Wu shi now!

Zhang Xuan knew that the lightning from the surroundings couldn't knock him out anymore, and he heaved a sigh of relief. He hurriedly got to his feet and flew into the distance.

He could still cultivate his soul further by tapping into the Power of Lightning, but the urgent matter at hand was to save Wu shi and the others. If he were to waste any more time, they could very well have lost their lives before he even arrived.

Fazed by the immense power of the lightning no longer, Zhang Xuan was able to travel extremely swiftly. Within just a few dozen breaths, he arrived at the area where he had met Wu shi and the others before. After a look at the area, he couldn't help but frown.

The entire area had been devastated by some kind of powerful force, and Wu shi and the others, who had still been recuperating a moment ago, had vanished from sight.

Zhang Xuan's complexion darkened. Could it be that... the Stoneleaf King has returned for them?

Chapter 1046

Lightning Elemental Orb

Under normal circumstances, considering how concentrated the lightning was, it was impossible for Wu shi and the others to flee from the field of lightning. Yet, at this moment, they had vanished from sight. That could only mean one thing—the Stoneleaf King had returned, and he had assaulted the expedition team!

However, that thought only remained in Zhang Xuan's mind for a moment before being rejected.

Wait a moment... Ding Ding might be unreliable at times, but its fighting prowess is not one to be underestimated. As long as the opponent hasn't reached Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm, it shouldn't be possible for the other party to defeat it. They should be fine under its protection!

Furthermore, I haven't been gone for too long. Even if Ding Ding is no match for the enemy, it should still be able to hold on for some time. Furthermore, considering the ridiculous concentration of the lightning falling around the area, no matter how formidable the Stoneleaf King may be, there's no way that he will be able to withstand it. It would be difficult for him to even protect himself at the moment, so how could he have the chance to harm Wu shi and the others?

The Golden Origin Cauldron was a Saint intermediate-tier artifact. Even though it was only capable of ramming itself into others without anyone controlling it, thus severely limiting its fighting prowess, it should have been more than capable of keeping the Stoneleaf King away from the others!

Not to mention, it would have been difficult for even the Stoneleaf King to survive the violent assault of lightning, let alone kill others.

"Hmm?"

Guessing that the Stoneleaf King hadn't returned yet, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before turning his gaze back to the rubble.

Since Wu shi and the others hadn't come under the assault of the Otherworldly Demons, the chances would be that they were currently hiding.

Taking a closer look, Zhang Xuan soon realized that something was amiss, and he chuckled softly.

Beneath the rubble of the ancient city, the dirt on the ground was fresh. If his deduction was not off, it was likely that Wu shi and the others were hidden underground.

Due to the unique constitution of humans, they would likely have drawn lightning to them had they stood above ground. As such, it was much safer for them to hide underground. That was indeed a good move on their part.

Hu!

Taking his body out from his storage ring, Zhang Xuan returned his soul to his body, and with a blast of zhenqi, he knocked away the surrounding rubble and began burrowing into the ground.

As expected, shortly after he burrowed into the ground, the intensity of the lightning strikes weakened considerably. At a depth of around eight meters underground, he saw the top of massive cauldron beneath him.

The Golden Origin Cauldron had expanded to its maximum size of around thirty meters wide. There was no one outside the cauldron, which meant that everyone was likely hiding within it.

"You are injured?"

Zhang Xuan was just about to pry open the cauldron lid to see how the others were doing when he realized that the aura of the Golden Origin Cauldron was extremely weak. It seemed to have sustained severe injuries.

"Young Master, you are here..." Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the Golden Origin Cauldron responded with a relieved but feeble voice. "They are all fine."

"What happened?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"The lightning was too strong; the others weren't able to withstand it at all. I tried to

save them, so I expanded my body to its maximum size to take the attacks in their stead. I feel very tired. I want to rest now," the Golden Origin Cauldron said weakly.

Seeing the Golden Origin cauldron in such a state, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but clench his fists tightly together.

To expand to over thirty meters wide in the face of such concentrated lightning, it was no wonder the Golden Origin Cauldron had ended up in such a state.

As a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, the lightning wouldn't deal too much damage to its body. However, the same could not be said about its spirit.

From the very start, souls and spirits were exceptionally weak against lightning.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron had managed to save the expedition team, its spirit had ended up being severely wounded by the relentless lightning strikes. As such, its consciousness was starting to fade.

"I will impart a cultivation technique to you right now, so try to cultivate it. You mustn't fall asleep at this point!" Knowing that the Golden Origin Cauldron's spirit could very well die were it to fall asleep at this moment, Zhang Xuan panicked. He hurriedly flicked his wrist and passed a cultivation technique manual over.

It was a method to temper one's soul. While he was unsure whether it was effective against spirits or not, he didn't have any better alternatives at that moment.

While the Golden Origin Cauldron was rather rowdy and unreliable at times, there was no doubt about its loyalty. Not to mention, it had only landed itself in its current state due to his order to protect the others. He couldn't allow anything to happen to it!

"Alright... I will cultivate it when I have time... Young Master, I might fear death, but I am not coward..." The Golden Origin Cauldron's voice slowly trailed off, and eventually, it fell completely silent.

"Ding Ding!" Zhang Xuan shouted in alarm, but the other party had already fallen asleep.

From the very start, the Golden Origin Cauldron had already been at its limit. It had been forcing itself to hold on until Zhang Xuan arrived.

"You aren't a coward; you are a hero," Zhang Xuan muttered softly to the Golden Origin Cauldron as he gritted his teeth tightly together. "Don't worry, I will save you."

The Golden Origin Cauldron might only have been an artifact, a very cowardly one at that, but in the crucial moment, it had still leaped in without any hesitation, choosing to sacrifice itself to protect the others.

Zhang Xuan had already promised to raise its cultivation to Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm. He couldn't just allow the Golden Origin Cauldron to remain in a coma like that. No matter what, he had to save it and fulfill its wish!

Staring at the Golden Origin Cauldron for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply, his voice tinged with helplessness, before he pried open the lid and entered it.

"Principal Zhang, you are back!"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Wu shi and the others hurriedly got to their feet and greeted him.

Under the protection of the Golden Origin Cauldron, they had been spared from the frenzied rampage of the lightning. On top of that, after recuperating from their injuries for some time, they had recovered considerably.

"Un. What happened? Why did the lightning suddenly run amok?" Zhang Xuan asked.

He had gone off to find Luo Ruoxin, so he wasn't too sure about the situation within the field of lightning. On the other hand, the expedition team had been at the center of the field of lightning when it all happened, so they would have a clearer understanding of the matter.

"It should be related to the Stoneleaf King that you spoke of. Perhaps, in the midst of searching for his treasure, he might have accidentally come into contact with something that resulted in the abrupt intensification of the lightning!" Wu shi deduced.

They had been discussing the matter a while ago, and this was the explanation that they found the most viable.

Otherwise, a field of lightning of such size couldn't possibly change all of a sudden, sending so many streaks of lightning down from above.

"That might very well be the case." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Indeed!

Previously, the Saint 4-dan Stoneleaf King had said that he was leaving to find some kind of artifact, but in the end, not too long after he had left, such a situation had occurred. There was bound to be a connection between the two matters.

"In which direction did the Stoneleaf King leave?" Zhang Xuan asked with narrowed eyes.

Had it not been for that fellow, the Golden Origin Cauldron wouldn't have fallen unconscious. No matter what, he had to exact vengeance!

Besides, regardless of what the artifact that the other party was seeking, it could only spell a calamity for them. Even at the cost of his life, he had to stop the other party!

Wu shi pointed and said, "He headed into the depths of the ancient city."

They were currently at the outskirts of the ancient city, and they had seen the Stoneleaf King heading toward the very center of the ancient city back then.

"I will head over there to take a look. You should all continue recuperating here for the moment," Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

Feng Xun stood up and said, "Principal Zhang, I will follow you. The Stoneleaf King is extremely strong; you won't be able to deal with him yourself. Also, I have a unique method that allows me to track down Otherworldly Demons."

He had only been unable to fight due to his zhenqi and stamina being sapped dry by the earlier demonic tune. During the battle with the Otherworldly Demons, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han had fought hard to protect the other expedition members, so he had not suffered severe injuries. Thus, after a moment of recuperation, he was already back to his peak state and ready to fight once more.

"Alright." Seeing that Feng Xun was in a good state, Zhang Xuan nodded.

Combat masters should charge bravely ahead without allowing their fear of death to get in their way. To ask them to cower in the face of an enemy was no different from challenging their faith.

Furthermore, even though Feng Xun had been badly pummeled in the battle against him, that was only due to the latter suppressing his cultivation. If the latter used the entirety of his Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivation, there was a good chance that he could be a match for even the Stoneleaf King.

The ability of the combat masters to rival opponents stronger than them wasn't for show.

Not to mention, Feng Xun also possessed certain means to track down Otherworldly Demons.

While the Eye of Insight was also capable of tracking down the trail of Otherworldly Demons, the problem with that was that most of the traces of the trail had dissipated under the frenzied lightning strikes. Instead of struggling to find a nearly invisible trail, he might as well bring Feng Xun along instead. This would also be a good opportunity for him to see what means the combat masters possessed.

A few other combat masters and master teachers also expressed their interest to tag along as well, but Zhang Xuan turned all of them down.

Firstly, those combat masters and master teachers hadn't fully recovered yet, so they were unlikely to be much of a match for the Stoneleaf King in their current state. Secondly, they had to protect some of the weaker and more severely injured expedition members as well. Otherwise, if the Stoneleaf King were to find their hiding spot before the exploring party found him, the others would be powerless to stand against him.

To be safe, it was better to have Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han remain with the rest of the expedition team.

Knowing the concerns that Zhang Xuan had, the others eventually relented. They hurriedly turned their attention back to recuperating from their injuries and depletion so that they could return to their peak state as soon as possible.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan burrowed through the soil with Feng Xun and returned to the surface.

The rampage of the lightning had alleviated considerably in the time that he had spent underground. Even without resorting to his means as a soul oracle, he would still be able to avoid the lightning easily and travel through the field of lightning safely.

Heaving a sigh of relief, he began heading toward the center of the ancient city.

Proceeding in, the lightning seemed to grow sparser and sparser. It was as if the ancient city harnessed some kind of unique power that prevented the lightning storm from wreaking havoc within.

However, while the lightning had decreased, the Stoneleaf King had used some kind of means to conceal his trail entirely. Even while using the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan found himself losing sight of the other party's trail.

"Let me take a look." Coming to a halt, Feng Xun flicked his wrist, and a unique artifact reminiscent of a compass appeared in his hand. He bit his finger and dripped a droplet of blood on the compass.

Weng!

The artifact whirred into action, and the needle on the compass pointed toward a certain direction.

"That way," Feng Xun said.

"What is this artifact? It is able to discern the route that the Otherworldly Demons have passed through?" Zhang Xuan asked in curiosity.

This was his first time seeing that artifact.

"This is the Undefined Mirror. It is particularly sensitive to fresh blood and killing intent. Due to the Zhenqi of Slaughter that the Otherworldly Demons cultivate, killing intent is bound to linger in areas where they have passed by. This Undefined Mirror serves to find the trail of killing intent, thus leading one to the Otherworldly Demon himself. Of course, the killing intent left behind by the Otherworldly Demons will eventually fade with time, so the effectiveness of the artifact will be very poor beyond the four-hour mark," Feng Xun replied.

"Undefined Mirror?" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The main purpose behind the existence of the combat masters was to stand against the Otherworldly Demons. It seemed like the Undefined Mirror was specially crafted to track down fleeing Otherworldly Demons.

The duo hurried in the direction pointed out by the Undefined Mirror.

Every once in a while, Feng Xun would take out the Undefined Mirror to ascertain their current location once more. After repeating the process several times, the duo soon found themselves standing before an old and tattered residence that stood at the very heart of the ancient city.

"Be careful!" Knowing that the Stoneleaf King was very likely to be within the residence, the duo glanced at one another before flying into the residence discreetly.

The courtyard of the residence had been completely destroyed. A towering Otherworldly Demon was currently seated at the centermost seat. Zhenqi gushed frenziedly out of his raised hands, seemingly attempting to defend himself against some kind of power.

In front of him, there was a relatively large lake, and a deep blue sphere, which was around the size of a fist, revolved continuously.

The zhenqi exerted by the Otherworldly Demon was directed right at the sphere, seemingly attempting to suppress the power within it.

Chapter 1047

The Fearsome Stoneleaf King

Hong long!

As powerful as the Otherworldly Demon was, the orb wasn't any weaker either. It revolved abruptly, seemingly trying to struggle free of the other party's control. In the next moment, a deep blue flash of light surged into the heavens, and an explosion reverberated shortly after as countless streaks of lightning raged in the surroundings.

It was as if the lightning all around them was controlled by the orb.

"The orb is controlling the lightning in the surroundings? Could it be... the Lightning Elemental Orb?" Feng Xun narrowed his eyes at the sight, and he anxiously sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan.

"Lightning Elemental Orb?" Hearing that name, Zhang Xuan frowned deeply.

Having read all of the books in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he was rather well-versed with the names of various famous artifacts. However, he had never heard of the Lightning Elemental Orb before.

"It is a lightning attribute artifact. Just like how spirit stones harness spiritual energy, the Lightning Elemental Orb harnesses an immense amount of lightning energy. Once released, it could easily cause devastating damage, making it an extremely fearsome artifact," Feng Xun explained apprehensively. A moment later, a doubtful look surfaced on his face as he added, "But the Lightning Elemental Orb is only produced in areas where the Power of Lightning gathers in great amounts. In terms of rarity, it is probably even less commonly seen than a 9-star master teacher, making it an extremely elusive artifact. Why would it appear here?"

"That orb over there is that valuable?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

He had never heard of the Lightning Elemental Orb before, so he didn't know how valuable it was, but he did know how elusive 9-star master teachers were. Even taking the entire Master Teacher Continent into account, it would be hard to find more than

a handful of them.

For the Lightning Elemental Orb to be as rare as 9-star master teachers, it was really way too scarce!

"Putting aside the fact that it wields the Power of Lightning, more importantly, what makes it extremely valuable is the fact that it is the ideal medium to serve as the core of any lightning attribute formations!" Feng Xun said. "It wields a very similar function to a formation plate. Gaining possession of it is equivalent to taking control of a powerful formation, allowing one to call forth the great might harnessed within it anytime, anywhere!"

A thought suddenly flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind, and he asked in astonishment, "Wait... Does that mean that the field of lightning here is a formation too?"

"That must be the case. Despite the lack of a formation master controlling the formation, the field of lightning is still able to easily exert fearful might. Just by that in itself, we can verify that it is a grade-8 formation at the least. If the Stoneleaf King succeeds in taking control of the Lightning Elemental Orb, we will be placed in a very dangerous position. By then, even with Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han's might combined, we won't be able to stand a chance against him!" Feng Xun exclaimed with a pale face.

"This..." Zhang Xuan's body tensed up.

As one who had suffered the battering of the lightning, he knew very well how fearsome the formation was. Had it not been for his means as a soul oracle, he would not have been able to make his way through the field of lightning at all in the first place.

Furthermore, this was under the circumstances that the formation was still uncontrolled by anyone. Should the Stoneleaf King gain ownership of the formation and drive the Power of Lightning harnessed within it against them... there would be no one who could stand against him. They would all, most likely, lose their lives.

The sudden intensification of the lightning earlier must be a result of that fellow attempting to gain control of the Lightning Elemental Orb as well, thus causing a disturbance in the formation, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

The Lightning Elemental Orb wielded the ability to control the massive lightning

formation spread out across the area. Most likely, the Stoneleaf King's attempt to gain control over the orb must have triggered its retaliation, resulting in the concentrated streaks of lightning falling from the sky earlier, nearly causing the death of the expedition team.

If even just the instinctive retaliation of the Lightning Elemental Orb was that powerful, the might that one could potentially wield from gaining full control over it was truly unimaginable.

With an awful complexion, Zhang Xuan discreetly communicated with the Violetleaf King in the Myriad Anthive Nest and swiftly received a clear answer—the towering Otherworldly Demon in front of him was indeed a member of the Upper Five Kings, the fourth ranked Stoneleaf King!

It was no wonder the other party dared to touch and attempt to manipulate an artifact as powerful as the Lightning Elemental Orb!

"We must stop him regardless of the cost! Otherwise, it will become nigh impossible to deal with him," Feng Xun said with tightly-clenched fists.

He had witnessed the battle between Wu Shi and the Stoneleaf King earlier, and the latter's strength was truly formidable, such that even he wouldn't be a match for the latter in his peak state. If the Stoneleaf King were to successfully gain control of the Lightning Elemental Orb on top of that, they wouldn't stand a chance at all!

By then, their entire expedition team could very well end up being wiped out here.

"Indeed. He hasn't succeeded yet, so we might still have time to stop him." Understanding Feng Xun's worries, Zhang Xun nodded.

"Un." Feng Xun nodded grimly. He was just about to propose a plan for them to act on when a warm blue glow abruptly burst forth from the Lightning Elemental Orb. The eye of the Stoneleaf King immediately lit up, and his hand swiftly reached forth to grab the orb.

Hula!

The orb began flying toward the Stoneleaf King's hands.

"There's no time, move!"

Seeing this sight, Feng Xun hurriedly flicked his wrist and whipped out a sword before disappearing in a flash. In the next moment, his sword was already right behind the Stoneleaf King's heart, seemingly going to impale the latter's chest.

In his view, the Stoneleaf King had already succeeded in taming the Lightning Elemental Orb. Once the orb fell into the other party's hands, the other party would wield endless Power of Lightning. At that time, they would be utterly doomed.

"Hold on for a moment..."

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was shocked to see Feng Xun charging forward without even discussing a plan with him. He hurriedly shouted while rushing forward, prepared to back Feng Xun up should the situation turn awry.

While the Stoneleaf King gaining possession over the Lightning Elemental Orb would put them at a greater disadvantage, it didn't necessarily mean that things were completely hopeless for them. As long as they were to remain patient, they would surely find an opening in the other party that they could exploit to achieve victory.

Even if it was to stop the Earthleaf King from gaining possession of the Lightning Elemental Orb, rushing forward without a concrete plan in mind was just plain recklessness, and it would only place them in a worse position.

Hong long!

Feng Xun wasn't a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall for nothing. Having achieved Sword-Man Union, his blade was completely harmonized with his entire being. His sword pierced forward with astounding speed and might reminiscent of a falling comet, such that even a Saint 4-dan expert would not dare face his attack head-on.

"Hmm? You aren't dead yet?"

On the other hand, the Stoneleaf King, who was in the midst of taming the Lightning Elemental Orb, suddenly felt a powerful killing intent behind him. Swiftly turning around, he saw Feng Xun, and his eyebrows shot up as he sneered, "Imbeciles. You could have taken this opportunity to flee as far as you could, but you foolishly chose to challenge me head-on. Since you are so eager to seek death, I shall accede to your request!"

After saying those words, the Stoneleaf King didn't bother to dodge. His right hand continued grasping firmly onto the Lightning Elemental Orb to tame it while his left hand burst forward with astounding might.

Hong long!

With a powerful blast of zhenqi, the Stoneleaf King's left hand collided forcefully against Feng Xun's stab, and as if a metal hammer crashing into a porcelain vase, Feng Xun's sword shattered into innumerable fragments.

Peng!

The remaining force struck Feng Xun squarely in his chest, sending him crashing heavily onto the ground as blood spewed wildly from his mouth.

There was simply too huge a gap in strength between the two of them. With just a single strike, Feng Xun was sent flying.

He's really strong! Zhang Xuan eyes narrowed in alarm.

He had encountered six of the Ten Great Kings, and most of them had ended up dying by his hand. Despite all of them being Saint 4-dan experts, there was a huge gap between them and the Stoneleaf King.

It was no wonder the Violetleaf King was so fearful of the Five Upper Kings, trembling non-stop upon hearing their names. They were indeed a force to be reckoned with.

However, regardless of how powerful the Stoneleaf King was, it was already too late for Zhang Xuan to back down at this point. He had no choice but to fight.

Wielding the Glacier Rain Sword in his hand, he flicked it in a beautiful arc before abruptly driving it forward with a powerful lunge.

It was similar to Feng Xun's attack, just that... his target was not the Stoneleaf King but the Lightning Elemental Orb in the latter's hand.

The most important matter at hand was to stop the other party from successfully taming the artifact. Considering the other party's superior physical resilience, it was unlikely that any attack directed toward the other party would work in the short-term. On the other hand, perhaps if he were to direct his attack toward the Lightning

Elemental Orb at this moment, there could be a chance that he would be able to catch the other party off guard and succeed.

Wuuuuuuuuuu!

Zhang Xuan had devoted the entirety of his strength into this single lunge, pushing his physical strength, zhenqi, and soul energy to their limits. The sheer might behind the lunge caused space itself to moan under the immense pressure, as if it would be torn apart from it

This was probably the strongest sword art he had ever executed. It was on par even with Feng Xun's previous attack.

"Humph, you think that such puny tricks will work against me?" Seeing through Zhang Xuan's intent, the Stoneleaf King narrowed his eyes menacingly.

Without moving much, he raised two fingers and flicked it lightly.

Peng!

A sharp pain assaulted Zhang Xuan's purlicue 1 , and the Glacier Rain Sword in his hand abruptly flew out of his grasp, stabbing into a wall not too far away. On the other hand, just like Feng Xun, Zhang Xuan was forcefully knocked to the ground.

It took a forceful push against the ground before he was able to regain his balance.

In that moment, grimness could be seen in his eyes.

The Stoneleaf King's strength was more fearsome than he had thought. He had already used his full strength, but he had been unable to withstand even a simple flick from the other party.

Instead of advancing toward the Stoneleaf King once more, Zhang Xuan retreated slightly as he hurriedly immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path to check on the book compiled on the Stoneleaf King.

He had managed to force the other party to execute a battle technique in the clash earlier, thus allowing him to compile a book on the other party in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"The Stoneleaf King is one of the Upper Five Kings of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, and he possesses a cultivation of Saint 4-dan pinnacle. He has a particularly powerful physical body that grants him superior defense... Flaws: No.1, there is a lack of zhenqi in his glabella whenever he drives his cultivation technique. No.2, due to his inability to circulate zhenqi through his armpit, the region is soft and vulnerable..."

Soon, Zhang Xuan finished reading through the entire book. However, instead of being delighted, his complexion turned even more awful.

The Library of Heaven's Path did list the Stoneleaf King's openings, but the glabella and the armpits... Those were the most well-guarded of all places, making it nigh impossible to breach their defenses! On top of that, he had to get into close quarters with the Stoneleaf King in order to attack those locations, but the other party could easily knock him back before he could even get within two zhang 2 of the other party. It was completely useless knowing those flaws!

Boom!

Suddenly, a loud explosion sounded. Following which, the Stoneleaf King raised his left palm and smacked it down.

A massive palm print that covered a region stretching over several dozen meters covered the area above him and Feng Xun. Before the palm print could even fall on them, the immense pressure it exerted had already made their breathing hasten. With just one look, it was apparent that the palm strike was not something they could withstand with their current strength.

"This is really bad!"

Zhang Xuan hurriedly executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art and dashed out.

Peng!

However, before he could get out of the area of the palm strike, an immense might struck his back forcefully, pushing him through eight walls consecutively before he finally came to a halt. Yet another mouthful of fresh blood spewed from his mouth.

Zhang Xuan struggled to his feet with a mix of shock and relief in his eyes.

It was fortunate that he had cultivated his physical body earlier, or else the palm strike

could have landed a fatal blow on him.

Even though he had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher and had made significant advancements in his physical body cultivation and soul cultivation recently, he was still too far off from matching up to the strength of a true Saint 4-dan expert. Four realms of difference in cultivation was simply too huge of a gap to be bridged.

Where is Feng Xun? Zhang Xuan anxiously scanned his surroundings before seeing Feng Xun climbing out from some nearby rubble in an unkempt state.

The other party's face was pale, and the front of his clothes had been dyed crimson with blood.

Clearly, the other party had suffered far severer wounds than he had.

While Feng Xun's fighting prowess was above Zhang Xuan's, his ability to flee in desperate situations seemed to be slightly lacking. Unable to get away in time, he ended up suffering a huge proportion of the palm strike's might. Were it not for his superior physical body, zhenqi, and soul as a combat master, he could very well have died from the strike.

Even so, his entire body had become limp from the strike. Multiple bones had shattered due to the powerful impact, rendering him incapable of movement.

"This is the end!"

While continuing to tame the Lightning Elemental Orb with his right hand, the Stoneleaf King's left palm struck once more.

His movements seemed light and flimsy, seemingly devoid of strength, but Zhang Xuan knew that should the palm strike land, Feng Xun would die without fail. Thus, he hurriedly charged toward Feng Xun in an attempt to save the latter.

Despite the previous conflict between the both of them, they were comrades working toward the same goal at the moment. He couldn't just watch the other party die before his eyes.

Huala!

Driving his Heaven's Path Movement Art to its very limits, he appeared before Feng

Xun in the blink of an eye. He hurriedly grabbed the latter and attempted to flee from the spot, but in that moment, he realized that it was already too late. The Stoneleaf King's palm was already right above him.

Vicious! Zhang Xuan bellowed in his mind, and in the next moment, powerful killing intent abruptly burst forth from his body.

Even though Vicious' killing intent wasn't too effective on fellow Otherworldly Demons, it could still disrupt the other party's attack for a short moment, thus possibly winning them some time to flee.

As Zhang Xuan had expected, upon feeling the powerful killing intent emanated by the young man before him, the Stoneleaf King was stunned momentarily. His palm strike also hesitated for an instant.

Hu!

In the brief moment he had bought for himself, Zhang Xuan successfully pulled Feng Xun out of the palm strike's area of attack.

Chapter 1048

He is a Celestial Master Teacher!

Boom!

The ground trembled, and countless houses collapsed. A massive palm was abruptly imprinted into the ground, cloaking everything in the area with dust.

It was fortunate that Zhang Xuan had reacted swiftly and had Vicious attack in his stead. Otherwise, the both of them would have surely been reduced into meat paste from the sheer force of that strike.

"How could he be so powerful?" Looking at the devastating damage before his eyes, Feng Xun's eyes were filled with disbelief.

As the Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, he could even an average Saint 4-dan master teacher easily. Yet, it was as if the Stoneleaf King before was an unshakeable mountain, an existence that towered far beyond them...

Could the other party have held back in the fight against Wu shi?

But that didn't make any sense? Why would the other party hold back against them?

"He must have succeeded in taming the Lightning Elemental Orb for his own use. It was through tapping into the power of the orb and the massive formation around us that he was able to wield such overwhelming might!" Feng Xun's eyes widened in horror.

After everything he had done to stop the Stoneleaf King from taming the Lightning Elemental Orb, his efforts ended up in vain.

It didn't seem like the other party had gained total control over the orb yet, but it should already be at around seventy percent, sufficient for him to tap into its power. With the augmentation from the might of the orb and formation, it was hard to say whether even a Saint 5-dan expert would be able to stand against the current Stoneleaf King, let more them!

"Who are you?"

Feng Xun wasn't the only one who was shocked. The astonished Stoneleaf King also hurriedly turned to Zhang Xuan to reassess him carefully from head to toe.

The killing intent which the young man had emanated previously possessed a fearsome level of purity which was on par even to his own. For such pure killing intent to appear on a human brat... this was inconceivable!

"Go!"

With Feng Xun around, Zhang Xuan knew that it could lead to many complications if he were to speak too much about the matter here, so he quickly pulled Feng Xun away and fled.

The Stoneleaf King before him was simply far too much stronger than the Violetleaf King, Goldenleaf King, and the others. It was impossible for the both of them to stop the other party with their limited strength. Rather than to fight to their deaths here, it would be better for them to escape for the time being, regroup with the others, and find another opportunity to strike down the Stoneleaf King.

"Trying to flee? Do you honestly think that you can get away from me?" the Stoneleaf King harrumphed coldly as he raised his hand and abruptly closed it into a fist.

Huala!

In the next moment, several bursts of lightning gushed down from the heavens, forming a tight cage that sealed the duo within.

"We are trapped..." Zhang Xuan's heart turned cold.

Judging from the intensity of the lightning, if they were to attempt to charge out of the lightning cage forcefully, the chances were that they would be reduced to ashes on the spot.

The other party had already gained the ability to control the Lightning Elemental Orb and the lightning formation. As long as they remained within the area of the formation, they would be unable to Stoneleaf King.

"Principal Zhang, our Combat Master Hall has a secret art that allows me to boost my

speed by twofold for a short period of time. I will use it to buy some time for you later on, so make use of the opportunity to flee." After a moment of hesitation, Feng Xun got to his feet and said grimly.

"Boost your speed by twofold? Will you still have the strength to escape after the duration of your secret art ends?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Secret arts that granted one massive boosts in physical capabilities often brought about devastating trauma to one's cultivation foundation and physical body. Even if one were to manage to kill one's enemy using the secret art, the chances were that one wouldn't live too long after that either.

Instead of replying to Zhang Xuan's question, Feng Xun chuckled softly and said, "Principal Zhang, to be honest, I have disliked you from the first time I met you. Your students have brought great dishonor to the Combat Master Hall, and I have been trying to find an opportunity to get even with you over that. It's a pity that I have yet to succeed.

"As much as I hate to admit it, the potential that you hold within you is far greater than mine. It is just a matter of time before you become a great asset to mankind! It is depressing to speak of this, but your life is worth more than mine!

"But it's fine. If my sacrifice can bring about to brighter future for humanity, I will gladly do it. Later on, I will open up a gap in the lightning cage, so make use of the opportunity to flee as far as you can... No matter what, you must survive this ordeal!"

"Flee?" Not expecting Feng Xun to be able to cast aside his differences in the crucial moment and work for the collective welfare for mankind, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel touched within. He nodded and replied, "Alright."

"Good. Let's begin then!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan had agreed to the plan, Feng Xun heaved a sigh of relief.

In the next moment, his aura abruptly surged.

Hong long!

His aura swiftly reached its peak, and just as he was about to activate his secret art, he suddenly felt a forceful blow at the back of his head. His vision before him abruptly darkened, and his body slumped weakly onto the ground, fainted.

"We won't be able to get away even if you were to use your secret art. Pardon me..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Feng Xun's plan was probably the best plan they had at hand, but... it still wasn't good enough.

Even if the other party succeeded in intercepting the Stoneleaf King and bought sufficient time for him to escape, there was no way he could escape given the sheer size of the lightning formation. As long as he remained in the lightning formation, the Stoneleaf King would surely be able to hunt him down.

Furthermore, if he were to flee by himself, the next victims would be Wu Shi and the others.

Given the current circumstances, fleeing was no longer an option anymore...

As Zhang Xuan and Feng Xun had been communicating with one another through zhenqi telepathy, the Stoneleaf King was unaware of the conversation between them. Thus, when he saw Zhang Xuan knocking Feng Xun out, he couldn't help but be bewildered by the abrupt turn in events.

"Stoneleaf King, it has been long since we last met. You asked who I was previously, right? Let me answer your question right now. It's me..."

After knocking Feng Xun out, Zhang Xuan raised his gaze towards the Stoneleaf King and chuckled softly. 'Geji, geji!', creaking sounds began echoing from his body as a token in front of his chest glowed brilliantly. As if his disguise had been released, he began to grow taller and bigger. A pure and condensed killing intent began drifting into the air, sending chills down the spines of others.

"Violetleaf King?" Upon catching sight of the other party's appearance, the Stoneleaf King was stunned for a moment.

"It's me." Zhang Xuan nodded.

It was hard to tell whether the Stoneleaf King was aware of the deaths of the other Otherworldly Demon Kings, so it wouldn't do to impersonate them. The Violetleaf King was still alive and was currently in his Myriad Anthive Nest, so impersonating as the Violetleaf King was the safest option at hand.

Besides, he also had the deepest understanding of the Violetleaf King, so it was easier for him to disguise as the latter as well.

"You and the Waterleaf King have been dispatched to carry out a mission, but we suddenly lost contact of you. What happened?" the Stoneleaf King asked with a darkened expression.

That fellow and the Waterleaf King had been tasked to find the map at the Poison Hall, but the Soulbound Token of the latter shattered all of the sudden. The Soulbound Token of that fellow remained intact, but communications from him abruptly halted. Everyone thought that he might have been taken hostage somewhere, but who could have thought that he would appear here out of the blue?

"Like you have seen, I have concealed my appearance to blend in with the humans and earn their trust. If I were to be caught communicating with the rest of you, my efforts could have very well be undone..." Zhang Xuan replied.

"Blend in with the humans?" the Stoneleaf King frowned. He immediately extended his Spiritual Perception to cover the Violetleaf King.

Honestly speaking, it was suspicious that the Violetleaf King, who had gone missing for more than half a month now, would suddenly appear here. There was a need to look carefully into this matter.

Taking a close look, there wasn't the slightest problem with the Zhenqi of Slaughter in the other party's body. In other words, the person standing before him was indeed the Violetleaf King.

"Un. I happened to chance upon a huge secret of the humans. If it turns out to be true, it could spell annihilation for our kind... Thus, I dare not to act recklessly. To be absolutely certain, I decided to disguise myself as a human to mix in with the rest of them."

Zhang Xuan knew that the Stoneleaf King was secretly examining him with his Spiritual Perception, but he made no attempts to hide from it at all. Instead, with a deep, worried frown furrowed between his brows, he replied with a hushed voice.

"Annihilation for our kind?" Retracting his Spiritual Perception, the Stoneleaf King shook his head and said, "You must be joking! Even with the incredible strength that Kong shi wielded back then, he only succeeded in driving us out of the Master Teacher

Continent! Just what could possibly happen that would result in an annihilation of our kind?"

On top of being the leader who had united mankind and founded the Master Teacher Pavilion, Kong shi possessed frightening strength as well. But while none of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was able to match him, they were eventually only driven out of the Master Teacher Continent. As such, how could the learning of a mere secret determine whether their kind would be annihilated or not?

This was just fear mongering!

"I didn't believe it at the start either, but... I can swear on my life that it is the absolute truth!" Zhang Xuan said grimly.

No matter how well he disguised himself as the Violetleaf King, it was hard to ensure that he wouldn't be seen through by the Stoneleaf King. In the first place, it was already suspicious for him to appear in the ancient domain.

The best way to resolve this issue was to redirect the other party's attention to something else... If he could put out big news one after another, the other party would be too shocked to doubt his identity any longer.

"Truth? Can you prove it?" Noting the conviction in the Violetleaf King's voice, the Stoneleaf King asked with a frown.

To be honest, at this point, he still didn't believe that the person before him was the Violetleaf King. Nevertheless, this didn't hinder him from listening to the other party's news.

"Have you heard of Celestial Master Teacher?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Celestial Master Teacher?" The Stoneleaf King was taken aback for a moment before his eyes narrowed in astonishment. "Of course I do! Kong shi was a Celestial Master Teacher himself. As one who has received the acknowledgement of the heavens, a Celestial Master Teacher is a truly indomitable existence. Could it be..."

"Indeed... I went to the Poison Hall to carry out my mission, but by a stroke of coincidence, I happened to find a Celestial Master Teacher. That's the reason why I suddenly changed my course of plans and disguised myself as a human to blend in with them!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"How could that be possible? According to our sources, Kong shi has been the only one in history to be conferred as a Celestial Master Teacher. There has been none after him who has achieved the same feat, not even his direct disciples, the 72 Sages... Where did you hear the news from?" The body of the Stoneleaf King stiffened. He couldn't believe his ears.

If a Celestial Master Teacher had really appeared amongst the humans, that would be truly a huge disaster for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. If that individual were to be allowed to grow to become another Kong shi, they might really well meet with annihilation.

Back then, it was under Kong shi's leadership that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe took a heavy blow and was forced out of the Master Teacher Continent. It took them several ten thousand years of rest before they managed to recover from the damage they had suffered then. If another Kong shi were to appear amongst the humans... They would truly be unable to make a comeback anymore!

While the past several ten thousand years of recuperation had allowed them to recover from the blow they had suffered back then, the mankind had also furthered its strength through the Master Teacher Pavilion, making them stronger than ever.

"There is no mistake with the news. Furthermore... I have been following behind the Celestial Master Teacher all along and intentionally lured him here..." Zhang Xuan said.

"Lured him here?" The Stoneleaf King glanced at the fainted Feng Xun as he asked doubtfully, "Are you saying that... he is the Celestial Master Teacher?"

"Indeed, that's him!" Zhang Xuan replied affirmatively.

"This..." the Stoneleaf King frowned, skeptical of Zhang Xuan's words.

While that combat master possessed the ability to rival opponents with cultivation beyond his, he seemed to be a rather reckless person. This was unlike how Celestial Master Teachers were depicted in the legends.

"Why? You don't believe me?" Zhang Xuan burst into laughter before saying, "Our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe must have certain ways to verify the identity a Celestial Master Teacher. If you don't trust me, you can verify it yourself!"

"There are indeed methods to verify that one is Celestial Master Teacher..." The

Stoneleaf King frowned. "However, it will be a little troublesome to do so..."

"This bit of trouble means nothing. What is more important is that we verify his identity. Once it is proven that he is a Celestial Master Teacher, we should find ways to bring him over to our side. With his strength, our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe will grow stronger and stronger. With the immense contribution we have made, we will surely go down in history as meritorious subjects!" Zhang Xuan persuaded.

"You're right..." The Stoneleaf King nodded. He hesitated for a moment longer before eventually nodding, "To test for the identity of a Celestial Master Teacher, we will require the help of the Windleaf King. He's the only one who wields such capability. Once he comes over, we will be able to verify whether the man you spoke of is truly a Celestial Master Teacher or not!"

Chapter 1049

An Alliance of Blood

"The Windleaf King?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

That was the third strongest expert of the Five Upper Kings! Who could have thought that such a powerful figure would be here as well?

Just a Stoneleaf King had nearly caused their entire team to be wiped out. How was he supposed to deal with the even stronger Windleaf King?

However, given his current identity as the Violetleaf King, there was no way he could turn down the request. Besides, since the other party was in the ancient domain as well, it was only a matter of time before they encountered one another. If he could meet the other party in advance, perhaps he could gather some intelligence and formulate a plan to deal with the other party.

"He's in the vicinity. I will call him here right now..."

Flicking his wrist, the Stoneleaf King whipped out a Communication Jade Token and casually wrote a few words on it, sending a message over. After that was done, he suddenly turned his gaze back towards Zhang Xuan with a doubtful expression. "If this human is really a Celestial Master Teacher, how could he appear here? Not to mention, how could you have possibly managed to uncover his identity?"

Clearly, the Stoneleaf King was still a little iffy the claims made by the fellow before him.

It was also no surprise that he would be feeling so skeptical about the matter. The Violetleaf King had disappeared an entire half a month before abruptly vanishing. On top of that, the other party had made a move against him while the other party was disguised as a human... There were far too many doubtful points regarding the issue.

Not to mention, there had only been a single Celestial Master Teacher in the world so far, and many millenniums had passed without anyone reaching the same height. If another Celestial Master Teacher were to appear, the Master Teacher Pavilion would

surely place that person under the tightest of protection. It was inconceivable that the Violetleaf King was able to uncover a Celestial Master Teacher that easily and even lure the other party into a dangerous place like this.

"Now that I think of it, it's truly a huge coincidence. The Celestial Master Teacher didn't come from any Sage Clan or the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarter. Instead, he originated from a measly Unranked Kingdom, slowly making his way up through the ranks..."

Without any hint of embarrassment, Zhang Xuan smiled lightly and said. "In order to avoid unneeded trouble, he has been concealing his identity all along. In other words, not even the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarter is aware of the appearance of that person. It's only through a series of coincidences that I found out about his identity. Back when I was looking into the whereabouts of the Poison Hall in Jingyuan City, I saw him undergoing the acknowledgement by the heavens, and it was only through that that I was able to ascertain his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher!"

"You are saying that... you happened to chance upon him receiving the acknowledgement of the heavens?" the Stoneleaf King asked in disbelief.

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Then... what kind of sight is it?" the Stoneleaf King asked in curiosity.

"A unique aura, powerful and inviolable, would descend from the heavens and surround the person. Before this aura, all master teachers would be forced to bow down to the person and acknowledge his identity and standing. At the same time, many bizarre phenomena would occur, such as the Trembling of the Myriad Tablets and so..." Zhang Xuan replied earnestly.

As someone who had undergone the acknowledgement ceremony thrice, he was extremely clear of the various happenings that would occur in the process.

"It does seem like the acknowledgement of a Celestial Master Teacher..." After hearing Zhang Xuan's account, the Stoneleaf King slowly nodded in agreement.

He had never seen the phenomena associated with the acknowledgement of a Celestial Master Teacher before, but he had heard of the various legends relating to it. The descriptions he had heard didn't differ much from the scene depicted by the Violetleaf King.

It seemed like there might be some truth to the Violetleaf King's words. Even if the man lying on the ground wasn't a Celestial Master Teacher, there was a good chance that he was closely related to the matter.

"The merit from capturing a Celestial Master Teacher and handing it over to the royalty is immeasurable..." At this point, the Stoneleaf King couldn't help but ponder over the implications of the matter.

It went without saying how important a Celestial Master Teacher was. If the news was true, the entire Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would go into a frenzy!

Just through this itself, he would surely be able to earn the favor of the elders. Through their guidance, even if he couldn't advance to the Emperor Stratum, he would still be able to easily reach the pinnacle of Saint realm!

But to ensure that he would be entitled to all of those valuable resources, he would have to make sure that the merit only went to him and him alone. At the current moment... it seemed like he had practically done nothing at all!

After all, it was the Violetleaf King who had lured the Celestial Master Teacher into the ancient domain.

"Should I just kill this fellow straight? That's the only way I can claim full credit of the matter. In any case, he has disappeared for quite some time, so who would know whether he had betrayed the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe or not? As long as I move fast and clear up his corpse, there's no one who would suspect me..." A sharp glint flashed across the Stoneleaf King's eyes as he shot a discreet glance towards the Violetleaf King.

While they were part of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, they didn't share any camaraderie amongst them. On the contrary, there was even strife rivalry amongst them.

The Qingtian Lineage allocated resources based on contribution, and considering the scarce resources in the otherworldly battlefield, he had been long wishing for his fellow Kings to drop dead.

This was precisely the reason why he didn't feel the slightest sympathy or sorrow when he heard that the other Kings had been killed, and he didn't bother to track down their murderer either. Instead, he was secretly delighted over the matter even!

"I am the one who brought that human here, and I know everything about him. Furthermore, after the time we have spent together, he already regards me as his true friend... If you were to kill me, not only will you be unable to make him submit to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, you might even be setting up a powerful enemy for yourself in the future!" Noticing the Stoneleaf King's killing intent, Zhang Xuan said with a wry smile.

He had already heard of the relationship amongst the Ten Great Kings from the Violetleaf King. To put it in a phrase, it was every man for himself. Given so, it wasn't too surprising that the Stoneleaf King would want to snatch a merit as large one concerning a Celestial Master Teacher.

"Violetleaf King, you must have misunderstood me... Since you were the one who found him and brought him here, it goes without saying that the merit should go to you? How could I possibly think of snatching the merit from you?" the Stoneleaf King laughed dryly as he swiftly concealed the ferocity in his eyes. However, his right hand continued grasping the Lightning Elemental Orb firmly, seemingly ready to make a move at any time.

"There's no need for us to put up such facades before one another. If I had the power to do so, I would have just taken him away right here, right now. I wouldn't have revealed his identity and wasted so many words with you." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Just a word of advice, but you should hold back any intention you are harboring against me for the moment. Otherwise, if this human were to die, it will be impossible to verify his identity. Even if you were to send him back to our tribe, you won't be able to get anything good out of this."

"This..." Hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King hesitated for a moment before finally loosening his tight grip over the Lightning Elemental Orb. "Very well, I won't make a move against you."

The other party was right. They could claim that the human was a Celestial Master Teacher for all they wanted to, but if they couldn't substantiate their claim with evidence, it would be all for naught. In other words, the human would become worthless to them.

"You won't make a move against me? I don't believe you. I want you to swear on that

to the Spirit God!" At this point, Zhang Xuan's face abruptly turned grim as he spoke.

"You want me to swear to the Spirit God?" the Stoneleaf King frowned.

"Indeed. If you swear that you won't make a move against me, I will say that we have discovered and captured the Celestial Master Teacher together when reporting the matter to the elders." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Oh?" the Stoneleaf King frowned.

It went without saying that it would be best for one to claim sole credit for the matter. After all, an additional person in the picture meant less soup to go around.

"I know that the strength I wield is insignificant amongst the Ten Great Kings. If anyone were to make a move against me to snatch the merit from my hands, there will be nothing I can about it. Furthermore, the merit for capturing a Celestial Master Teacher is too great, I don't think that I will be able to swallow the rewards of it alone. It will be much safer with someone on the same boat... So, why not?" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"This..." the Stoneleaf King fell into deep contemplation.

The Violetleaf King was right. As the saying goes, the tree that rises above the forest will be torn down by the gale. Given the Violetleaf King's current strength, there was no way he would be able to ward off those who intended to snatch the merit or rewards from his hands.

Through extending an alliance to him, the Violetleaf King would be in a much safer position. In other words, the Violetleaf King would be dependent on him for protection and wouldn't betray him for the time being.

But more importantly than that, he was stronger than the Violetleaf King. It wouldn't be too late for him to find a way to deal with the other party after the tribe affirmed the Celestial Master Teacher's identity and distributed the rewards.

"What do I have to do to gain your trust?" Having come to a decision, the Stoneleaf King turned to Zhang Xuan and asked.

"Simple. I have a gourd of wine here. We shall first have a toast of blood 1 to seal our alliance before swearing to the Spirit God that neither of us will harm the other. That's

the only way that I will be able to trust you!"

Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a gourd of fine wine.

"A toast of blood?" the Stoneleaf King was a little hesitant after hearing those words.

"Indeed. I advise you to quickly make your decision. Once the Windleaf King arrives and learns of the matter, I fear that he will attempt to kill the both of us..." Zhang Xuan said.

Greed brought out the darkest shadows hidden within one's heart. Even master teachers were no exception to the rule, let more the unprincipled Otherworldly Demons.

Were the Windleaf King were to learn that the person before them was a Celestial Master Teacher, there was a very good chance that the other party would attempt to silence them so that he could claim full credit over the matter.

And more importantly, if the Violetleaf King were to choose to side against the Windleaf King at that point, he would be placed in a very dangerous position...

"Alright, I'll agree to it!" the Stoneleaf King made his decision.

The personalities of the Ten Great Kings was no secret, and the Windleaf King was particularly renowned for his greed and cruelty. He could indeed see the other party killing his own brethren to fulfill his desires.

And given the Windleaf King's strength, it would be hard for them to match the other party even with their combined strength, let more alone!

"Let's begin then!" Seeing that he had the other party's agreement, Zhang Xuan nodded.

He slit an incision in his finger and dripped a few droplets of blood into the gourd of wine. After shaking it slightly to mix his blood into the wine, he tossed it over to the Stoneleaf King.

Catching the gourd, the first thing the Stoneleaf King did was to extend his Spiritual Perception towards the wine. After confirming that there was nothing else mixed into the wine, he was finally able to allay his worries. Biting his finger, he dripped a few

droplets of blood into the wine as well.

"Good. Let's drink it!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said.

"Very well!" The Stoneleaf King lifted the gourd to his mouth, and just as he was about to drink it, a thought that suddenly surfaced in his mind made him halt his action. "You go first!"

With just a glance at the other party's face, Zhang Xuan could instantly tell what the other party was worried about. He took the gourd of wine from the other party's hands and took two hearty gulps of it.

On the other hand, seeing that the Violetleaf King was fine after drinking the wine, the Stoneleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. He took the wine and drank several mouthfuls of it as well.

After which, he raised his palm up to the sky and vowed, "I, the Stoneleaf King, swear to the Spirit God that I shall honor my alliance with the Violetleaf King. We shall stand aside one another through adversities as brothers, never to betray the other..."

"I, the Violetleaf King, swear to the Spirit God that I shall honor my alliance with the Stoneleaf King..." Seeing that the Stoneleaf King had made his vow, Zhang Xuan hurriedly followed suit.

He was swearing in the Violetleaf King's name anyway, there was no need for him to hesitate.

"Since we are now allied with one another, I hope that we can team up against the Windleaf King should he try to pull off anything funny." Zhang Xuan turned to the Stoneleaf King and said.

"Don't worry!" the Stoneleaf King reassured.

Amongst the Ten Great Kings, the Windleaf King was the only one who had an artifact that could possibly verify the identity of a Celestial Master Teacher. If it wasn't for that, there was no way they would have invited the other party over!

"Once we verify that this human is a Celestial Master Teacher, the Windleaf King could attempt to snatch him from our hands or even make a move against us. So, pay close attention to me and act on my command later on..." After a moment of thought, the

Stoneleaf King turned to the Violetleaf King and instructed.

While he still didn't have unreserved trust towards the Violetleaf King, at the very least, they had already sworn to the Spirit God in their names. Naturally, he was also more inclined to trust the latter instead of the Windleaf King.

"Alright!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "I will try to sound him out later on after we confirm this human's identity. If he were to make a move against me, I hope that you can immediately step forward to slay him. We are on the same boat right now, and we will either float together or sink together."

"Un." the Stoneleaf King nodded.

Just as he was about to continue speaking, a huge gale of wind abruptly blew in the surroundings. In the distance, a towering figure could be seen flying over.

"Stoneleaf King, don't you know that I have better things to do? Why are you calling me over in such a hurry?"

Huala!

A powerful Otherworldly Demon landed on the ground before them.

Chapter 1050

Jadeleaf King

The Otherworldly Demon's height and aura paled in comparison to the Stoneleaf King, but there was a look of utmost coldness in his eyes. His skin was smooth like jade, and the intervals between his breaths were extremely long—a sign of his deep cultivation.

"Young Master, he's the Jadeleaf King!" the Violetleaf King anxiously sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan with a quivering tone. "He cultivates the Broken Jade Technique, and not only does he possess a powerful physical body, his Primordial Spirit wields frightening strength as well. His cultivation has also reached Half-Leaving Aperture realm..."

"Half-Leaving Aperture realm?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. Turning his gaze back to the Otherworldly Demon who had just arrived, he noticed that there was an inconspicuous gleam at the other party's glabella. It seemed as if the other party was just a step off from freeing his Primordial Spirit from the constraints of his body.

Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm; the term 'Leaving Aperture' referred to the Primordial Spirit fleeing from an aperture in the body and soaring freely in the heavens. In such a form, a cultivator would be more closely aligned with the world, allowing to draw forth more power from his surroundings to exert far greater fighting prowess.

The gap between Primordial Spirit realm and Leaving Aperture realm was a major demarcation line. Take the current Zhang Xuan for example, if he could catch a Primordial Spirit realm expert off guard, he would still stand a chance to slay the latter. However, if he were to encounter a Leaving Aperture realm expert, the only viable course of action he could take was to flee as far as he could.

Even a breakthrough to Saint realm wouldn't grant him the strength to face Leaving Aperture realm experts!

While Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivators had yet to wield the devastating strength that true Saint 5-dan experts possessed, they still weren't existences that could be killed with simple physical attacks.

It was no wonder why the Violetleaf King was so fearful of the Jadeleaf King. Even in comparison to the Stoneleaf King, the strength that the Jadeleaf King wielded was frightening.

"I miscalculated. I should have relayed information regarding the Qingtian Ten Great Kings to the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion and have them dispatch more powerful master teachers over..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

Given that he had killed quite a few Otherworldly Demon Kings himself, and considering the fact that the seal had been closely guarded by the Master Teacher Pavilion, Zhang Xuan thought that it should have been impossible for Otherworldly Demons to enter the ancient domain. Thus, he didn't think much of the matter.

The most powerful experts they had at the moment was Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, Mu shi, and Feng Xun. However, even they were a far distance away from matching up to a Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert.

It could be said that the overall prowess of their expedition team was on a different level from that of the Ten Great Kings...

If only he knew that there were such powerful enemies lurking in the ancient domain, he would have definitely requested for the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion to dispatch more powerful master teachers over.

While it was only a branch, they should have quite a few Saint 4-dan pinnacle master teachers.

"Forget it, it's too late for regrets now. I should focus on what's before me now..." A moment after the thought surfaced in his mind, Zhang Xuan tossed it aside decisively, not allowing it to bother him.

There was no point thinking about what he could have done better back then. In any case, he did manage to kill six out of the ten of them. If he were to work a little harder than before, the remaining four should still be doable!

"There's an urgent matter which I require your help on." the Stoneleaf King stepped forward and said.

"Hm?" the Jadeleaf King looked at the Stoneleaf King questioningly.

"It's like that. According to the sources we have received, that human lying over there is said to be a very noble existence amongst mankind. Thus, we hope that you can help us verify his true identity!" the Stoneleaf King pointed to Feng Xun and said.

The Stoneleaf King decided not to speak about the matter concerning the Celestial Master Teacher first. At the current point in time, it was best not to reveal too much first.

"Verify his true identity?" the Jadeleaf King asked as he turned his gaze upon Feng Xun. "Judging from his clothes, he should be a combat master. Does he possess some other identity? Also... Violetleaf King, why are you here?"

After saying those words, the Jadeleaf King turned a piercing gaze towards Zhang Xuan.

"It's like that..." Zhang Xuan repeated the same lie that he had told the Stoneleaf King. However, he also chose neglected to mention the words 'Celestial Master Teacher' as well.

"You are saying that in order to track down that noble existence amongst mankind, you chose to blend in together with them so as to lure the other party here?" the Jadeleaf King asked with a frown. A moment later, he nodded slightly and said, "Very well then. Let me see just what kind of existence this human is for you to go so far for him. If he is really as noble as you put him out to be, I will help you report this matter to His Majesty on your behalf and beseech him to reward you generously!"

After saying those words, the Jadeleaf King whipped out an altar. It was different from the one which Zhang Xuan had procured from the Violetleaf King. Bronze and large, it was filled with many bizarre inscriptions that could send one's head spinning with just a look.

"That is the Immaculate Jade Altar that only the Jadeleaf King possesses. Of the Ten Great Kings, the Qingtian Emperor only bestowed it upon him... Through this altar, one can summon the Spirit God to ascertain a person's true identity and verify the authenticity of their words!" the Violetleaf King informed Zhang Xuan telepathically.

"The Qingtian Emperor bestowed it only to the Jadeleaf King?" the Jadeleaf King was neither the strongest or the weakest of the Ten Great Kings. Why would the Qingtian Emperor make such an exception for the other party?

"The Jadeleaf King lords over the Hall of Crime, and he is in charge of interrogating and punishing all criminals of the Qingtian Lineage..." the Violeleaf King explained.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

As one who was in charge of interrogation and punishment, it was important for the Jadeleaf King to possess such an ability. Otherwise, it could cause great disorder in their judicial system.

Taking a closer look at the altar, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little confused. Somehow, he just couldn't make the association between the ability to discern a person's identity together with an altar.

His confusion didn't remain for too long.

In the next moment, the Jadeleaf King whipped out a couple of tributes and placed it on the altar. The altar released a dim glow which consumed the tributes with a blazing flame. Following which, a sacred white glow suddenly fell upon him and Feng Xun.

Seeing how the Violeleaf King was covered amidst the glow as well, the Jadeleaf King frowned.

The Stoneleaf King's complexion wasn't too good either, and he bellowed, "Violeleaf King, we are in the midst of verifying the identity of that human. You should step aside for the moment."

"Don't worry, my presence here won't affect the results. I caught this fellow with my own hands, so I want to see for myself just who he is..." Zhang Xuan replied.

He wasn't too sure how the other party's verification technique worked, but if one thing was for sure, Feng Xun definitely wasn't a Celestial Master Teacher. If he were to step away from the glow, there was no doubt that the white glow wouldn't be able to pick up anything at all.

Standing within the white glow could potentially reveal his identity, but Zhang Xuan was confident in his ability to maintain his disguise while revealing the presence of the Celestial Master Teacher amongst them.

And of course, the revealed Celestial Master Teacher would be Feng Xun as well.

"Anything that pleases you!" Seeing the wariness in the Violetleaf King's eyes, the Stoneleaf King thought that the other party was afraid that they would steal his prey, so he could only shake his head helplessly.

"I'll continue then." the Jadeleaf King said as he continued placing more tributes on the altar.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan discreetly tapped his leg on Feng Xun's back and infused the aura unique to Celestial Master Teacher into the latter's body.

This aura was the distinctive mark of a Celestial Master Teacher, but if it wasn't driven, it would be impossible to notice it either.

It was through this means that Zhang Xuan dared to say that Feng Xun was a Celestial Master teacher without fear.

Weng!

The glow surrounding the duo gradually grew brighter and brighter. Zhang Xun was still unable to notice anything special, but the Jadeleaf King's already had a frown deeply etched on his forehead.

"There's indeed something bizarre about that person's identity..." After saying those words, the Jadeleaf King continued placing a few more treasures on the altar.

The tributes that were previously placed on top of the altar had already been burned dry.

On the other hand, the Stoneleaf King couldn't help but tighten his fists upon the sight.

While Zhang Xun might not have much of an understanding regarding the workings of the Immaculate Jade Altar, as one of the Upper Five Kings, he had a rough conceptualization of how it worked. The more tributes required for the altar, the higher standing the other party possessed.

After refilling the tributes time and time again, the white glow of the tribute finally gathered together as one to form four huge words—Acknowledged by the Heavens!

"As expected!" Upon seeing the words, the eyes of the Stoneleaf King reddened as his breathing hastened.

It seemed like the Violetleaf King wasn't lying. The human lying not too far away was indeed a Celestial Master Teacher just like Kong shi!

As long as he handed that human to the elders, his standing would soar through the ranks.

"Acknowledged by the Heavens... He is a Celestial Master Teacher?"

At the same time, the eyes of the Jadeleaf King also began burning with greed.

As the third strongest expert of the Five Upper Kings, he was well aware of the significance of these four words.

"That explains why these two fellows were in such a rush to find me... So they have caught themselves a huge fish..." the Jadeleaf King clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

"Jadeleaf King, this human was captured by me and Stoneleaf King. Since we have verified his identity, we intend to return to the tribe this instant to hand him over to the elders!" Seeing that his plan had succeeded, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

As innocent as those words sounded, it was intended to strike a stake between the relationship of the Stoneleaf King and the Jadeleaf King.

By mentioning that he had worked with the Stoneleaf King to capture the Celestial Master Teacher before adding that they intended to return to the tribe right now, that was as good as saying that they didn't intend to give the Jadeleaf King a share of the credit!

"This..." Hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King's face immediately warped in horror.

He too understood the significance of those words. It was a given that they would have to return to the tribe to hand the Celestial Master Teacher over to the elders, but... surely the Violetleaf King didn't have to point it out at this instant? Those words were as good as saying that they were intending to keep the benefits of this matter all to themselves.

And as he had expected, the Jadeleaf King's complexion immediately turned awful. Following which, his lips curled up to reveal a smile completely devoid of warmth, "We haven't accomplished the mission entrusted to us by His Majesty yet. Don't you think

that it is inappropriate for you to leave right now?"

"Inappropriate? Why would that be so? Don't worry, we won't implicate the other Kings in this matter. We will take full responsibility for this matter. We are willing to accept any punishment His Majesty accords us due to this matter..." Zhang Xuan replied earnestly.

Hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King nearly fainted on the spot.

At this juncture, they should be trying their best to soothe the other party's rage by emphasizing that the merit of capturing the Celestial Master Teacher belonged to everyone... And yet, that fellow actually said that the other Kings wouldn't be 'implicated' in this matter at all...

Were there any better words to provoke the Jadeleaf King than that?

"Jadeleaf King, that's not what he means..." The eyelids of the Jadeleaf King began twitching uncontrollably, and he hurriedly rushed forward to explain.

However, halfway through his words, the red-faced Jadeleaf King interjected, "Is that your opinion on this matter as well?"

"Of course, I have already discussed this matter with the Stoneleaf King! If you back down at this point, we can still consider letting you off. However, if you dare to lay your hands on our merit, we don't mind ending your life right here!" Zhang Xuan replied ferociously, seemingly desperate to protect his merit.

Right after hearing those words, the Stoneleaf King's body staggered, and he nearly blacked out on the spot.

When in the world did I say those words?

You said that you were going to sound him out, not to taunt him!

Are you a three-year-old kid? Don't you know how to hide your intentions? To voice it out right before the other party... you are dragging the both of us down to our graves!

"Good. Very good! It has been many years since anyone dared to threaten me like that..." With teeth gritted tightly in rage, the Jadeleaf King stared at the duo before him with killing intent raging in his eyes.

"Jadeleaf King, it's not what you are thinking! We have captured the Celestial Master Teacher to..." While cursing the Violetleaf King for being an incompetent ally, the Stoneleaf King hurriedly tried to explain the matter so as to calm down the situation when a groan suddenly sounded from not too far away.

Ahhhhh!

The human who was lying on the ground, Feng Xun, had woken up. Rubbing his head, he slowly got up with a dazed look in his eyes.

"What's going on? What Celestial Master Teacher?"

In his groggy state, Feng Xun heard a particularly striking phrase and subconsciously asked about it.

Chapter 1051

Killing One Another

Feng Xun had only been temporarily knocked out by Zhang Xuan's palm. As a combat master who possessed a huge reserve of zhenqi and a powerful body, it was natural that it wouldn't take him too long to recover.

His head was still spinning from the earlier impact, and in his moment of daze, he heard the words 'Celestial Master Teacher', so he instantaneously assumed that he was in a safe location. As such, he let his guard down and allowed words to spill out from his mouth.

"It's good that you have woken up." Seeing that the human had woken up, the Stoneleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. He was about to grab the other party to force him to spill out some words so as to alleviate the current situation when the Violetleaf King abruptly sent a foot into the other party's face.

Peng!

The foot struck Feng Xun's head squarely, and before the latter could even process what was going on, he had already fainted once more.

"Ah?" The Stoneleaf King was stunned.

Didn't you say that the both of you have a rather close relationship with one another? Why did you look as if... you were kicking a stray animal?

Paying no heed to the knocked-out Feng Xun, the Jadeleaf King glared at Zhang Xuan and spat, "End my life? You two?"

"Indeed, the two of us will suffice to deal with you! Since we have confirmed this human's identity, you no longer possess any value to us!" Zhang Xuan replied haughtily. "If you continue to live, you will only spread word of this matter and endanger us. Thus, Stoneleaf King and I have decided that as long as you join our alliance and swear not to speak of this matter to any soul or try to steal our merit, we will spare you this time around."

"Wonderful..." Seeing how the Violetleaf King was getting more and more arrogant, not showing the slightest respect toward him, the killing intent in the Jadeleaf King's eyes intensified. "Since you wish to kill me, it's only right for me to return the favor to you!"

Boom!

Right after saying those words, a powerful palm strike flew right for the Stoneleaf King.

In the Jadeleaf King's view, the Violetleaf King posed no threat at all. The one whom he should be wary of was the Stoneleaf King.

"Listen to me..." Seeing that the Jadeleaf King was completely enraged by the Violetleaf King's words, the Stoneleaf King anxiously tried to explain himself. However, before he could even finish his words, the Violetleaf King had already interjected with a loud bellow by the side, "Old Stone, quick, move according to our plan! Otherwise, we might very well die here!"

The Stoneleaf King nearly went insane from anger.

Plan?

When have we decided on a plan?

I only told you to follow my commands if the Jadeleaf King intended to make a move against us. Yet, before the Jadeleaf King even did anything, you went full out trying to provoke the other party. Just how in the world did I get myself stuck with an ally like you?

Furthermore, Old Stone? Stone your head! My surname is not Stone, alright?

However, he knew this wasn't the time for him to get into a conflict over the matter. It was apparent that the Jadeleaf King had already made up his mind to kill them. If he didn't fight back, he might just end up losing his life here.

Thus, clenching his fists, the Stoneleaf King twisted the Lightning Elemental Orb in his hand, and a thick congregation of lightning fell from the sky.

Hong long!

It collided with the Jadeleaf King's palm strike, and a huge shockwave burst into the surroundings, collapsing innumerable ancient buildings. The two powerful forces were equally matched, and they ended up neutralizing one another.

"And here I was wondering where you found the guts to stand up against me. So, you have to managed to tame the Lightning Elemental Orb and gained control of this lightning formation. However, if you think that you can kill me like that, you are dreaming!"

Seeing that his attack had been struck down by the other party's lightning, the Jadeleaf King bellowed furiously as he whipped out a long saber.

Huala!

He flicked the saber, and a vacuum cut through the air.

With just a single strike, the Jadeleaf King had succeeded in tearing a rift between the heavens and the earth. As if isolated from the world, the lightning, which had been descending furiously toward him earlier, suddenly found itself unable to enter the area.

While the Stoneleaf King had tamed the Lightning Elemental Orb, he had only gained control over a small portion of the field of lightning. Due to the limits of his cultivation, he was unable to bring forth its full might. He could easily devastate any cultivator weaker than him with it, but against a Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert like the Jadeleaf King... it was still a little lacking.

"I was indeed not a match for you in the past, but times have changed. Who knows? You might be the one who falls in the end."

Even though the Jadeleaf King had managed to fend off the first wave of lightning, the Stoneleaf King didn't despair. Instead, driving the Lightning Elemental Orb in his hands, he called forth another wave of lightning.

Huala!

The sky abruptly grew darker, and the rumbling of the thunder sounded more fearsome than ever. In the blink of an eye, the lightning shattered the vacuum that the Jadeleaf King had formed with his saber qi and appeared right above the Jadeleaf King's head.

Upon seeing the lightning above him, the Jadeleaf King didn't choose to flee immediately. Instead, an illusory figure appeared behind his back.

At Half-Leaving Aperture realm, while one's Primordial Spirit was still unable to free itself fully from the confines of the body, it could still escape from the Yuanshen acupoint and form something like an avatar, enhancing the strength that one could call forth significantly.

As expected, as soon as the illusory figure materialized, the space surrounding them was sealed off all of a sudden, trapping the Stoneleaf King and Zhang Xuan like animals in a cage. The furious streaks of lightning struck relentlessly on the cage, but the lightning was unable to breach it at all.

"Die!" After doing that, the Jadeleaf King's eyebrows shot up. He raised the saber in his hand and hacked it down upon the Stoneleaf King.

On the other hand, the Stoneleaf King knew that he wouldn't be able to match the Jadeleaf King without the augmentation of the lightning formation, so he began to panic. He quickly whipped out a long spear to face the Jadeleaf King's saber while shouting, "He is using his Primordial Spirit to seal the surrounding space. He can only sustain this state for a very short period of time, and it will be highly damaging to his Primordial Spirit. This is the perfect opportunity to bring him down, attack!"

It would be difficult for him to stand against the Stoneleaf King alone, but with the Violetleaf King's assistance at this moment, he should be able to corner the Jadeleaf King through a pincer attack.

The sealing of space through one's Primordial Spirit was a powerful technique, but it was incredibly depleting as well. Furthermore, his lightning was also striking the seal ferociously, so no matter how powerful the other party was, he couldn't hold on for too long.

With his full might, the Stoneleaf King barely succeeded in withstanding the Jadeleaf King's assault. At that moment, he couldn't help but realize that the Violetleaf King had yet to make a move despite it being the perfect opportunity, so he quickly turned his gaze over to see what was wrong.

That glance left him nearly spurting blood.

That fellow was looking at their battle by the side with his hands crossed, seemingly

not intending to help at all!

In this instant, the Stoneleaf King suddenly came to a realization. Damn it, I fell for that fellow's ploy.

From the very start, the Violetleaf King didn't intend to collaborate with him! The entire matter was a ploy to have him and the Jadeleaf King kill one another.

The previous vow had only restrained the other party from making a move against him, so it wasn't against the rules for the other party to have the Jadeleaf King deal with him.

Furthermore, no matter who died in the fight, the surviving side would still have to let him live for the time being in order to ensure that the Celestial Master Teacher remained under control. In other words, that fellow would be the ultimate victor of the fight regardless of who won!

What a fearsome scheme.

This won't do. I can't let that fellow succeed!

Understanding this, the Stoneleaf King quickly sent a telepathic message to the Jadeleaf King while fending off the latter's attacks. "Jadeleaf King, don't fall for that fellow's tricks! He is trying to turn us against each other and have us kill one another."

"Have us kill one another?"

Seeing that there was room for negotiation, the Stoneleaf King heaved a sigh of relief as he quickly replied, "That's right! The merit from finding the Celestial Master Teacher is huge; it is more than sufficient for the three of us to share it. There's no need for us to turn against one another over such a small matter."

"Hmm..." Pondering over the Stoneleaf King's words, the Jadeleaf King was about to reply when he suddenly felt cold killing intent behind him. Unknowingly, a sword had emerged behind him, and it was aimed straight for one of his flaws, making it hard for him to deal with it.

Hu!

The Jadeleaf King quickly leaped aside to dodge the attack, but even so, the sword still

managed to leave a deep slash on his back, causing him grievous injuries. Crimson blood flowed down his back profusely.

Turning around, he saw the Violetleaf King retreating several dozen meters away with his sword tightly in his grasp, fleeing out of his attack range. There was an excited gleam in the other party's eyes as he shouted, "Old Stone, you were right! That spot is indeed his mingmen."

"Damn it!" the Jadeleaf King bellowed furiously.

He had thought that there was some truth to the Stoneleaf King's words, but who would have thought that it was only a ploy to distract him while the Violetleaf King launched an assault on him? With a frenzied cry that was overflowing with fury, he sent a palm strike toward Zhang Xuan while bringing his saber down upon the Stoneleaf King simultaneously.

"I..." Not expecting that the Violetleaf King to leap into battle right when he was about to convince the Jadeleaf King, the Stoneleaf King felt incredibly stifled and crazed within.

Never in his life had he encountered anyone who was so shameless!

How can you make me take responsibility for the trouble you have caused? That's really too much!

Furthermore... turning his glance over, he realized that the Violetleaf King was already standing a safe distance away from the Jadeleaf King after launching his assault. The other party's arms were crossed before his chest as he watched upon the commotion with a look of interest.

Feeling so indignant that he could spurt blood, the Stoneleaf King knew that it was futile for him to attempt to explain himself to the Jadeleaf King anymore. He had already lost the latter's trust for good, so he could only grit his teeth and focus on the battle.

Boom boom boom!

Even though the Jadeleaf King possessed higher cultivation than the Stoneleaf King, the Stoneleaf King was able to even the playing field with the powerful Lightning Elemental Orb in his hands and his superior physical defense. On top of that, the

Violetleaf King's previous assault had dealt significant damage to the Jadeleaf King, so the both parties found themselves evenly matched for the time being.

However, the devastating shockwave that emanated from their powerful clashes caused the entire ancient city they were in to collapse uncontrollably, forming rubble all around.

Incredible... Seeing the strength the battling duo wielded, Zhang Xuan gave them a huge thumbs up.

No wonder they were the Five Upper Kings, the fighting prowess that they possessed was indeed frightening!

With Zhang Xuan's current strength, he could easily decimate any Saint 2-dan pinnacle cultivator. However, against experts of the Stoneleaf King and Jadeleaf King's caliber, the only option for him was to flee as far as he could.

Putting aside battling them, even the shockwaves emanated by their fight were hard for him to bear.

As time passed, the battle between the both of them intensified.

Logically speaking, with the Stoneleaf King's superior defense and control over the powerful lightning field, the Jadeleaf King should have fallen already. Yet, the both sides were still fighting on equal grounds.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that the Stoneleaf King held the decisive advantage in the battle. With the lightning formation in his hands, he was able to send wave after wave of powerful strikes at the Jadeleaf King relentlessly, causing injuries to gradually accumulate all over the Jadeleaf King's body. Without a power source like the lightning formation to fuel his attacks, the Jadeleaf King found his stamina and zhenqi depleting swiftly as well.

"Damn all of you... Even if I have to die, I will bring the both of you down with me!" Knowing that he would only be killed at this rate, the Jadeleaf King roared furiously as immense power burst forth from his body. The illusory figure behind him suddenly grew larger, and finally, as if breaking past its bottleneck, it freed itself entirely from the body.

That... He drew his Primordial Spirit out from his body forcefully! Zhang Xuan

narrowed his eyes in alarm.

Back then, he had encountered such a situation with the Waterleaf King as well.

Back then, in a moment of rage, the Waterleaf King had used a secret art to draw out his Primordial Spirit to attack him. However, it was a pity that the other party had chosen the wrong method of attack, resulting in his failure!

Currently, the Jadeleaf King was steadily accumulating injuries, and he knew that he would be killed eventually. Thus, he decided to go all out and use the secret art to draw his Primordial Spirit from his body.

Using the secret art, even if he were to survive the side effects, he would sustain permanent damage, and his cultivation would decline sharply. However, one thing was for sure—he would surely be able to kill the darned duo before him.

If the Stoneleaf King is killed, it is unlikely that I will be spared... I should find a place to hide in first. Considering the drastic side effects that came with the utilization of the secret art, Zhang Xuan knew that the Jadeleaf King was already determined to kill the both of them, and he couldn't help but frown.

This situation wasn't advantageous for him.

He had intended to spectate the battle from afar, but if the Jadeleaf King were to become desperate and go after him right before his death, that would be disastrous.

Thus, Zhang Xuan immediately got up and prepared to flee from the battle. At that moment, however, a figure gradually rose from the ground.

As that figure rose, he shook his head vehemently to shake out the grogginess in his mind.

That figure was Feng Xun. Due to his powerful constitution, his ability to recover was truly incredible!

"What is going on? Where am I?" Feng Xun mumbled in confusion beneath his breath.

Just as he barely opened his eyes, he saw a brick heading right toward his face.

Padah!

With his eyes rolling up, Feng Xun fainted once more.

Chapter 1052

Fudging

It was not convenient to allow Feng Xun to see the current sight before him. Otherwise, how could Zhang Xuan explain how he was able to disguise himself as an Otherworldly Demon and have the Stoneleaf King and Jadeleaf King fight against one another? Not to mention, even if he could come up with an explanation, it was another matter whether Feng Xun would trust him or not. After all, anything concerning the Otherworldly Demons required caution.

Thus, the most effective method to use at this point was to just knock the other party out.

It was simple, efficient, and effective. There was no point going to so much trouble when there was such an ideal solution. Besides, the bricks from the collapsed buildings all around him only seemed to be further tempting him into it.

Zhang Xuan subconsciously lowered his gaze to shoot a glance at Feng Xun, and he saw the latter lying on the ground with his face still twitching uncontrollably. It was as if he was unable to believe that a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall like him would end up being knocked out three times consecutively. Furthermore, it seemed to be getting more and more humiliating each time.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the duo fighting in the sky, and his eyebrows shot up.

After the Jadeleaf King drew out his Primordial Spirit, the Stoneleaf King immediately fell into a disadvantage. Despite the superior defense that the Stoneleaf King possessed, it took mere moments for the Jadeleaf King to inflict injuries all over his body and even sever his arm, causing the Lightning Elemental Orb to fall to the ground. Fresh blood trickled profusely down his body, and his face turned pale.

It seemed like the Jadeleaf King had realized that the key to the Stoneleaf King power lay in the Lightning Elemental Orb. Without the augmentation from the lightning formation, there was no way the Stoneleaf King could stand against him.

"Let's die together then!" Suffering grievous wounds, the Stoneleaf King knew that he couldn't stand against the Jadeleaf King in his current state. Thus, with a furious roar, he also utilized his secret art and drew his Primordial Spirit out.

The Stoneleaf King didn't possess a cultivation as high as the Jadeleaf King. Even after drawing his Primordial Spirit out, the Jadeleaf King could still live by finding a suitable body to house himself in, but the same option wasn't open to the Stoneleaf King. Thus, this could be considered a suicidal attack by him.

Hong long long!

The two powerful Primordial Spirits began clashing with one another, and the intensity of the battle was hiking up as time passed. Zhang Xuan surveyed his surroundings, only to note that the surroundings had really been completely sealed. Thus, he could only shake his head helplessly.

Given the current circumstances, there was no way he would be able to escape. Even if he chose to hide in the Myriad Anthive Nest, he wouldn't be able to hide the nest itself. With just a scan from their Spiritual Perception, he would be found in an instant. By then, he would be completely cornered, putting him in an even worse position.

Zhang Xuan frowned. If the Stoneleaf King wins, I can just poison him to death. However, if the Jadeleaf King wins, I will be in deep trouble.

A battle at such a level was something he couldn't hope to intervene in with his current strength. If he forcefully got involved, he would be killed before he could even do anything.

If the Stoneleaf King won, he would still hold the initiative. However, if the Jadeleaf King won, considering what he had done to the other party previously, there was no way the other party would let him off.

Taking another look at the battle, he saw that the Stoneleaf King's Primordial Spirit was being overwhelmed by the Jadeleaf King, forced to retreat again and again. At this rate, it was only a matter of time before the Stoneleaf King lost.

I really miscalculated... Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched.

As expected of the third strongest expert of the Ten Great Kings. Even with the Stoneleaf King in control of the lightning formation, it seemed like the one who would

emerge victorious in the end was still the Jadeleaf King.

What should I do? Seeing that the Stoneleaf King was on the verge of succumbing to the Jadeleaf King, Zhang Xuan paced around worriedly. However, in that moment, he suddenly caught sight of a certain figure not too far away.

After drawing his Primordial Spirit out, the Jadeleaf King had left his body lying completely unguarded by the side.

He likes to draw out his Primordial Spirit, doesn't he? Hehehe... With a sinister chuckle, Zhang Xuan walked over to the Jadeleaf King's body.

Zhang Xuan had to admit that the fellow's Broken Jade Technique was indeed rather powerful. It had granted his body exceptional durability and sturdiness. While it was not on par with the Stoneleaf King's, it was plenty fearsome.

Drawing the Glacier Rain Sword, Zhang Xuan hacked down forcefully on the Jadeleaf King's body, but to his astonishment, he was unable to breach the other party's defense.

It seemed like the Jadeleaf King hadn't left his body completely unprotected after all. He seemed to have used some kind of powerful secret art to reinforce his body's defense before drawing his Primordial Spirit out.

Next, Zhang Xuan tried to place his finger on the Jadeleaf King's acupoints to infuse his zhenqi in, but a short moment later, he shook his head.

The Jadeleaf King's body was wholesome like jade. With Zhang Xuan's current strength, he was unable to force his zhenqi into the other party's body to poison him.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a pile of lava appeared before him.

Previously, when he was passing through the lava, he had taken the opportunity to secretly store some of it in his storage ring, thinking that he could utilize the heat to smith better weapons. It was good that he had done so, because it happened that he had a good use for it at this very moment.

With another flick of his wrist, he threw the lava right at the fellow before him.

Tzzzzzzzzzz!

As soon as the lava came into contact with the other party's body, the sizzling sound of corrosion immediately echoed loudly in the air. The body, which even the Glacier Rain Sword was unable to cut through, began melting.

Not bad... Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Honestly speaking, even when stored within the storage ring, the lava would still cool down very soon. Thus, it was good that he could find a use for it now.

As powerful as the body of the Jadeleaf King was, it still paled in comparison to the lava at a hundred meters deep in the lava pool.

"You..."

On the other hand, the Jadeleaf King seemed to have noticed something from above, and glancing downward at his body, he nearly spurted blood and died on the spot.

As he had yet to fully reach Leaving Aperture realm, it was highly damaging for him to force his Primordial Spirit out of his body. However... as long as his physical body remained unharmed, he could still return to it. He would have faced a sharp decline in his cultivation from doing so, but at the very least, he would still have been able to live. Yet, who could have known that someone would attempt to burn his body?

That was equivalent to having one's home burned down by an arsonist! His Primordial Spirit no longer had a place to return to anymore!

"You scoundrel!" the Jadeleaf King spat in anger.

In his moment of daze, the Stoneleaf King managed to get a few attacks in, which nearly caused his Primordial Spirit to dissipate.

"I will deal with you first before killing that fellow." As angry as the Jadeleaf King was, he knew that he wouldn't be able to get even with the Violetleaf King without dealing with the Stoneleaf King first. Thus, with a furious roar, he charged forward and launched a frenzied wave of attacks on the Stoneleaf King.

Boom boom boom boom!

Deafening explosions reverberated across the horizon, and the spiritual energy within a radius of several dozen kilometers was disrupted by the intense battle. Not too long later, the Stoneleaf King's Primordial Spirit finally dissipated under the relentless assault of the Jadeleaf King.

The dissipation of one's Primordial Spirit was equivalent to the complete destruction of one's soul. In such a state, not even a deity could save one.

The reason the Stoneleaf King was ranked fourth among the Five Upper Kings was due to the immense strength his physical body possessed. However, having focused too much of his efforts on developing his physical body, his Primordial Spirit had ended up being slightly weaker than his peers. As such, the only plausible conclusion in a clash with the Jadeleaf King was his defeat.

Of course, considering the situation back then, the Stoneleaf King had no choice but to pit his Primordial Spirit against the Jadeleaf King's too. His limbs had been severed, and his physical body had sustained grievous injuries. If he hadn't drawn his soul out using his secret art, he would have died as well.

The only difference was how long it took.

"It's your turn..."

After slaying the Stoneleaf King, the Jadeleaf King immediately turned to the culprit who had reduced his physical body into a puddle of goo. With a furious roar, he charged forward.

"Kill me, and I will kill this Celestial Master Teacher!" Zhang Xuan quickly held Feng Xun up and placed the latter before him. "Think about it. As long as he remains alive, you can hand him over to our tribe. With the contribution you earn from that, finding a new body for you to possess and regaining your strength will be a walk in the park."

At this moment, this was the only leverage he had over the Jadeleaf King, as well as the only card he could play.

The Jadeleaf King was tempted to skin the fellow before him alive, but there was sense in the other party's words. If the Celestial Master Teacher were to die, the battle that he had fought would have been for naught. After all he had been through, this was an outcome he couldn't accept.

"Do you think that I will trust you?" Forcing himself to remain calm, the Jadeleaf King glared at the Violetleaf King with wintry eyes.

If not for the other party, he wouldn't have ended up fighting with the Stoneleaf King, landing himself in such a pitiful state. He had decided that from this point on, he wouldn't believe a single word that the other party said... including even punctuation!

Holding Feng Xun's neck tightly, Zhang Xuan gazed at the Jadeleaf King nonchalantly. "It doesn't matter whether you trust me or not. However, there is one fact that you have to acknowledge. If this human dies, you won't be able to obtain anything."

"You're right. If he dies, I won't be able to obtain anything. However, without a body, I won't be able to live for long either. Since the eventual outcome is death anyway, don't you think that I will be better off finding another companion to accompany me on the journey to hell?" the Jadeleaf King spat coldly.

If he had reached Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm, his Primordial Spirit might still have been able to survive outside of his body. However... he had used his secret art to escape from the confines of his body, and that had dealt heavy damage to his Primordial Spirit. If he couldn't find a body to house his Primordial Spirit soon, it wouldn't be long before he breathed his last.

This was similar to how an infant that was born after forty weeks of pregnancy was the healthiest. If one were to attempt to conduct a caesarean delivery prematurely, it could potentially be damaging to both the mother and the child.

Such was the same for the Primordial Spirit as well.

At Half-Leaving Aperture realm, a cultivator would have already opened their Yuanshen acupoint, the pathway for the Primordial Soul to escape from the confines of the body. They still couldn't draw it out, not because it was impossible to do so, but because their Primordial Spirit wasn't strong enough for it yet.

Such was the case for the Jadeleaf King. His Primordial Spirit was still too weak to sustain itself, so he needed to find a body to nourish it. At the current rate, his Primordial Spirit would slowly wear thin and eventually dissipate.

In a sense, this was similar to the woes faced by soul oracles, the only difference being that the time soul oracles had was significantly shorter.

"Without a body? Isn't the Stoneleaf King's body lying right over there? You can possess it!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

"You..." the Jadeleaf King's eyes were glacier cold. "There is a fundamental difference in the cultivation techniques we practice, so if I possess his body, I will be in constant anguish and suffering."

"This..." Zhang Xuan rubbed his lower jaw with a frown. "I see. That makes things a little troublesome."

Despite his lack of understanding of Primordial Spirits, through his extensive knowledge of souls from the heritage of the soul oracles, he knew that the other party was speaking the truth.

It was true that the Jadeleaf King would be able to survive by possessing the Stoneleaf King's body, but due to the fundamental differences in their cultivation techniques and constitutions, not only would he suffer a steep fall in his fighting prowess, he would be in constant misery as well.

"Right!" Zhang Xuan didn't hesitate for long before slapping his head in realization, seemingly having thought of something. "Why didn't I think of it earlier? I happen to have specially crafted a puppet not too long ago, and since it is attributeless, there is no way it can clash with your cultivation technique. Why don't you enter it to recuperate for the time being? Once we bring the Celestial Master Teacher back to our tribe and receive the reward, you will surely be able to make the breakthrough to Leaving Aperture realm, and by then... it won't matter whether you have a body or not!"

"Puppet?" The Jadeleaf King frowned.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded. He flicked his wrist, and a huge Otherworldly Demon puppet appeared before his eyes.

It was one of the puppets that he had taken out of the underground cavern where Wu Yangzi had been imprisoned. After resolving the flaws in its structure, it wielded prowess comparable to a Saint 3-dan cultivator.

"This is forged out of the body of an ordinary tribesman, so it is attributeless. It does complement with my Primordial Spirit fairly well." The Jadeleaf King took a look at the puppet and hesitated.

The puppet had been forged using the living body of an Otherworldly Demon, and it was driven by a reserve of spiritual energy at its core. While it was weak, its strength lay in that it was attributeless, so it was a better fit with his Primordial Spirit compared to the Stoneleaf King's body.

Naturally, this also meant that he could display greater fighting prowess within the body of the puppet as well.

"To tell you the truth, you have nothing to earn from killing me. In the first place, the one who tried to kill you wasn't me but the Stoneleaf King. Besides, given the limited strength I wield, there's no way that I will be able to harm you!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"It took me a great amount of effort to forge this puppet, and I was intending to use it to craft a clone. However, since you require it, I will give it to you to serve as a temporary body. Once we return to the tribe with the Celestial Master Teacher, everything can be resolved easily."

Saying so, Zhang Xuan patted his puppet fondly, seemingly a little reluctant to part with his treasure.

Chapter 1053

Slaying the Jadeleaf King

"Humph!"

The Jadeleaf King harrumphed coldly as he swiftly analyzed the situation he was in.

His physical body had been destroyed, and if he were to attempt to kill the Violetleaf King, the Celestial Master Teacher would surely die as well... and once that happened, there would be no hope for him.

Just like what the other party had said, as long as he took the Celestial Master Teacher back to the tribe, he would be entitled to all kinds of rewards—the strengthening of his Primordial Spirit, the heightening of his cultivation, or even obtaining a powerful body would be available options for him.

I should just agree to his demands first. The most important thing for me at the moment is to remain alive. In any case, the journey back to the tribe will be a long one, so there will be plenty of opportunities for me to kill him while his guard is down.

Gradually, a plan surfaced in the Jadeleaf King's mind.

During the long journey back to the tribe, it was inevitable that the Violetleaf King would lower his guard from time to time. As soon as that happened, he would be able to strike and rid that despicable scoundrel before him.

That way, he would be able to exact vengeance without compromising the safety of the Celestial Master Teacher before him.

This would not be an ideal moment for him to make his move. The Violetleaf King was clearly guarded, and if he were to make a reckless move, he would be the one to lose out in the end.

In his Primordial Spirit form, he was indeed powerful. However, he could not maintain this state for too long.

"Allow me to take a look at your puppet." After a moment of contemplation, the Jadeleaf King flew over to the puppet and began examining it closely with his Spiritual Perception.

To his surprise, the puppet was extremely well-made. While the materials used for it were low quality, the craftsmanship did well to maximize its strength within its constraints. The puppet might have been a little weak, but once complemented with his Primordial Spirit, it would still be able to display considerable fighting prowess.

It would not match up to his prior strength, but it would be more than sufficient to deal with a mere Violetleaf King.

After making such calculations, he examined every aspect of the puppet carefully, and after confirming that there were no traps hidden within it, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Hu!

With a swift movement, his Primordial Spirit dived into the puppet.

A moment later, he opened the puppet's eyes and began moving his new limbs. He turned his gaze toward the Violetleaf King and said, "Alright, you should be able to release the Celestial Master Teacher now, right?"

"Of course!" Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan tossed Feng Xun casually to the ground.

Due to the heavy impact Feng Xun had suffered from the brick, he still had not woken up.

The Jadeleaf King was stunned. He released the human just like that?

He had expected the other party to continue holding the Celestial Master Teacher hostage so as to ensure his own safety. To obediently release the Celestial Master Teacher at his command... was the other party really not afraid that he would claim his life?

"Fool! You are asking for death!"

Regardless, this was a good opportunity to strike. The eyes of the Jadeleaf King lit up as he swiftly pulled the unconscious Celestial Master Teacher behind him to protect the latter. At the same time, he charged forward to launch a devastating attack on the

Violeleaf King.

After how the Violeleaf King had made a fool out of him, how could he, the proud Jadeleaf King, possibly allow the other party to continue existing in the world?

"Jeez. I have already offered you a chance to continue living, but you just don't know how to treasure it." Seeing the Jadeleaf King charging ferociously toward him, the Violeleaf King shook his head calmly and sighed. Instead of making any attempts to dodge or counterattack, he lifted his hand casually and snapped, "Down!"

Kacha!

The charging Jadeleaf King abruptly felt a surge of intense pain assaulting him, causing his body to stiffen on the spot.

Putong!

The momentum from his previous action dragged him onto the ground.

The Jadeleaf King narrowed his eyes in disbelief. "You... You laced the puppet with poison?"

In just a mere instant, he understood why the other party dared cast aside the only leverage over him without any hesitation. It turned out that the puppet had been poisoned! Furthermore, for a Primordial Spirit as powerful as his to succumb to it, it was apparent that it was an exceptionally potent poison.

"You are quite smart. If you pledge loyalty to me and obey every single one of my commands without any hesitation, I can spare you!" Zhang Xuan said calmly.

He had already foreseen this from the moment he took his puppet out. Previously, when he was tapping the puppet fondly, he had discreetly infused his Heaven's Path zhenqi into it.

His Heaven's Path zhenqi had no particular attribute, so even if the Jadeleaf King noticed it, he probably only thought that it was the innate power that the puppet harnessed, so he didn't pay it any heed.

In other words, from the moment that the Jadeleaf King sent his Primordial Spirit into the puppet, he was already doomed.

"You want me to pledge loyalty to you? Dream on!" the Jadeleaf King roared furiously as his Primordial Spirit charged toward the acupoint that he had entered the puppet from.

Since he was able to enter the puppet, naturally, he should be able to leave as well.

"You might have been able to enter the puppet easily, but it won't be that easy for you to leave it!" Zhang Xuan said with a wry smile.

The Jadeleaf King's heart turned cold upon hearing those words. He realized that every single acupoint on the puppet had been sealed by a unique zhenqi. Even with the overwhelming strength that he commanded, he found that he was unable to break out.

All of his escape routes were sealed; he was trapped.

Despite all of the precautions that he had taken, he had still ended up falling for the Violetleaf King's ploy. Stifled, the Jadeleaf King nearly spewed a mouthful of blood, but there was no blood within the puppet for him to spew. The more he thought about the matter, the more despaired and frightened he felt.

Even though the fellow standing before him being weaker than him, he found himself feeling deeply terrified of the other party. Preying on the weaknesses in his mind, the other party had managed to turn him against the Stoneleaf King and nearly had him killed. Even after he emerged victorious in the fight, it turned out that the other party had already prepared a subsequent measure to deal with him—a puppet laced with lethal poison.

Had the Violetleaf King been such a formidable figure all along? Or could it be that...

Suddenly, a possibility surfaced in the Jadeleaf King's mind. "You aren't the Violetleaf King!"

"Not bad at all, you do have some wits. At the very least, you came to the truth right before the end." Zhang Xuan chuckled as he began morphing his body back amid cracking sounds.

Geji! Geji!

A moment later, he reverted back to his original appearance.

The Jadeleaf King narrowed his eyes in shock. "You are a human? Wait, could it be... you are the real Celestial Master Teacher?"

Celestial Master Teacher, an existence that even the heavens had acknowledged. How could a person who had been acknowledged by the heavens possibly be so useless as to be captured that easily and be knocked out time and time again? Not to mention, recalling how the Violetleaf King had, for some peculiar reason, insisted on standing beside the other human a moment ago... the truth could not have been clearer to him at this moment.

"I'll give you some time to think about it. Become my servant, and you will be able to avoid death," Zhang Xuan said impassively, choosing not to respond to the Jadeleaf King's doubts.

The implications that came with his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher was simply too great. Even the notion of revealing it to the Master Teacher Pavilion left him feeling deeply apprehensive, so how could he be willing to speak of it to an Otherworldly Demon?

"You want me to become your servant? Dream on! But... to have lost to a Celestial Master Teacher like you, I admit my defeat!" the Jadeleaf King sneered coldly before shaking his head despondently.

Following that, a golden fluid suddenly flowed from the puppet's eyes before the puppet fell heavily to the ground.

"You..."

Zhang Xuan quickly rushed up to the puppet, only to realize that the Primordial Spirit within had already dissipated.

Trapped within the puppet, the Jadeleaf King was unable to escape nor explode his Primordial Spirit. At the same time, he was also unwilling to bow to a human. Thus, he had chosen to end his life!

"Decisive and very loyal to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe as well," Zhang Xuan remarked.

Choosing to end his life knowing that he had been cornered, it seemed that despite being greedy and vicious, the Jadeleaf King was deeply loyal to his kind.

Just that... it sure is a huge waste of my puppet! Looking at the lifeless puppet lying on the ground, Zhang Xuan felt his heart ache.

The Jadeleaf King's Primordial Spirit was simply too strong. While he had been unable to explode his Primordial Spirit, the energy that was released with his suicide still resulted in the destruction of the puppet's internal structure, resulting in it being effectively crippled. After all the trouble he had gone through to raise it to Saint 3-dan...

However, these two Kings do have quite a few treasures with them. Putting everything else aside, just the saber and spear they have in their possession are at Saint low-tier. Well, they are only at low-tier, but that's not too bad either...

Given Zhang Xuan's proficiency in smithing, it seemed like it would be... impossible for him to fix the puppet. Fortunately, the wealth that the two Kings possessed was more than enough to make up for the loss of his puppet.

On top of the Saint low-tier sword and spear, the Jadeleaf King had the bizarre altar and innumerable tributes. Those might just prove useful at some point in time.

I should just take everything first. Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan grabbed the storage rings of the duo before heading toward the Lightning Elemental Orb on the ground.

The orb was initially in the Stoneleaf King's possession, but after the Jadeleaf King mercilessly severed his arm, the orb ended up falling to the ground. At the current moment, it was emitting a dim light.

Stopping before the orb, Zhang Xuan squatted down and reached out to grab it.

Bzzzzzzt!!!

Before his hand could even come into contact with the orb, a searing pain assault his palm. Countless mini streaks of lightning burst toward him, attempting to burn him to cinders.

Upon seeing the sight, Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched. He hurriedly leaped aside to avoid the attack.

The Lightning Elemental Orb was indeed powerful, but with his current strength, even

getting close to it was difficult, let alone taming it.

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress. But it would be extremely wasteful of me to leave an artifact as powerful as this lying here.

It was one thing if he had not seen it, but now that he had seen it and it was within reach, would he not be letting himself down if he did not claim it for his own?

Perhaps I could try that...

After a moment of thought, his eyes suddenly lit up. Placing the body of the Stoneleaf King before him, he slowly advanced toward the Lightning Elemental Orb.

Bzzzzt!

Sensing the approach of a lifeform, the Lightning Elemental Orb immediately sent innumerable streaks of lightning toward the invader who was trespassing on its territory. However, it was all perfectly ward off by the Stoneleaf King's body.

In a few moments, Zhang Xuan was already standing right before orb, and with a swift movement, his hand reached out and touched it.

Kacha!

Right after Zhang Xuan muttered 'flaws' in his mind, he was abruptly sent flying by a powerful surge of electricity. His body stiffened, and smoke drifted from his hair, which was standing on end. At the same time, his clothes were also ripped into tatters from the surge of electricity, creating quite an unkempt look.

This... Isn't the Lightning Elemental Orb a little too powerful?

It took a long while before Zhang Xuan could recover from his daze.

It was fortunate that his soul had been tempered by the lightning previously and his body had achieved the level equivalent to a Saint low-tier artifact. Otherwise, that burst of lightning could have easily left him bedridden for several days.

Alright. Let me see if there's any way I can tame it with my current strength, Zhang Xuan thought as he turned his consciousness toward the Library of Heaven's Path.

In the momentary touch back then, he had managed to achieve his goal and compile a corresponding book regarding the Lightning Elemental Orb.

And as expected, with just a thought, a book began flying over from one of the shelves, and it landed right in Zhang Xuan's hands.

He flipped it open casually.

"Lightning Elemental Orb, an artifact produced in regions where the Power of Lightning accumulates. It can be used as the cornerstone of lightning attribute formations, as well as a tool to control them..."

The content within the book flowed into Zhang Xuan's head swiftly, and within just an instant, he had already found out what the flaws of the Lightning Elemental Orb were.

So that's the case... I should be able to tame it even with my current strength. However, it will still be difficult for me to drive it unless I reach Primordial Spirit realm.

After understanding the situation concerning the Lightning Elemental Orb, Zhang Xuan shook his head with bitterly.

Just as he had guessed, the field of lightning was indeed a grade-8 formation. As such, it could only be controlled via one's Primordial Spirit. Even if he could successfully tame the Lightning Elemental Orb, it would still be impossible for him to use it to gain control over the lightning formation.

Forget it, I should tame the Lightning Elemental Orb first and think about everything else later...

Casting the dilemmas in his mind aside, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the Lightning Elemental Orb once more.

He might have been unable to use it at that moment, but there would surely be a day when he would be able to wield it. A grade-8 Slaughter Formation... that was a treasure that countless cultivators would love to lay their hands on!

Chapter 1054

Black Sandstorm of Oblivion

If I wish to tame the Lightning Elemental Orb, I will first have to use my zhenqi to nourish it. After reading the details regarding the orb in the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan had already gained a thorough understanding of its strengths and flaws.

Forcefully taming it was not a feasible solution, especially considering the limits of his current strength. Thus, he could only nourish it slowly, just as the Stoneleaf King had done earlier.

Raising his hands, he began sending out surges of zhenqi from his palm toward the Lightning Elemental Orb from a distance away.

Weng!

Sensing zhenqi encroaching on its territory, the orb began revolving as it emitted a deep blue glow. In an instant, countless streaks of lightning fell from the sky.

Zhang Xuan swiftly lifted the Stoneleaf King's body above him to fend off the lightning. Unfortunately, Feng Xun, who was lying not too far away, wasn't so lucky. Two streaks of lightning breached the lingering seal that the Jadeleaf King had set up previously and struck his body, causing it to convulse with even greater intensity than before.

It was fortunate that the seal had neutralized most of the energy contained in the lightning, or else those two strikes could have claimed Feng Xun's life.

I must proceed a little more carefully... Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched.

He quickly calmed himself down before gathering his zhenqi to infuse it over once more. This time, he proceeded a little more carefully and slowly, and it did not induce any retaliation from the Lightning Elemental Orb. Around twenty minutes later, delight covered Zhang Xuan's face.

With just a wave of his hand, the Lightning the Elemental Orb gradually flew toward him. After twenty minutes of effort, he had successfully managed to tame it!

It sure is a powerful artifact... Holding the sphere in his palm, Zhang Xuan could feel the immense power contained within, and his eyes lit up in excitement.

Just as he had deduced before, the Lightning Elemental Orb was the key to controlling the lightning formation. While he was unable to drive it due to his lacking cultivation at the moment, fortunately, it was still within his means to restrict the lightning formation to within the orb.

Taking a deep breath, he raised the Lightning Elemental Orb in the air and began driving his zhenqi into it.

"Return," Zhang Xuan muttered beneath his breath.

Hualala!

Countless streaks of lightning in the surroundings began flowing toward the Lightning Elemental Orb like countless streams converging into the vast ocean.

"Mmm?"

At this moment, Feng Xun regained consciousness once more. Upon seeing the sight before him, his eyes widened in astonishment, and his body began trembling in fear.

The sight before him was simply too frightening. A fellow who had nearly been charred black from a lightning strike was raising his hand before him, and countless streaks of lightning were converging in his direction, seemingly attempting to tear him apart.

Is this hell, or am I dreaming? That man... Principal Zhang?

Taking a closer look, Feng Xun realized that the charred black fellow was none other than Zhang Xuan!

Suddenly recalling the situation that they were in, he quickly scanned his surroundings, and soon, he saw the Stoneleaf King's body lying right beside Zhang Xuan, not moving or breathing in the slightest.

Principal Zhang managed to kill the Stoneleaf King? Feng Xun could hardly believe his eyes.

It was only in this instant that he confirmed that he wasn't dead yet.

Before he was knocked out, he had clashed face on with the Stoneleaf King, and the latter had been so powerful that he had been defeated within a single encounter.

Yet, after regaining consciousness, he suddenly found the carcass of the Stoneleaf King lying cold on the ground... Just what in the world happened while he was out? What did Principal Zhang sacrifice in order to kill the Stoneleaf King and save him?

More importantly... while he was not dead, why was his body convulsing uncontrollably? Furthermore, that dull pain that was constantly assaulting his head... just who was the scoundrel who had knocked him out time and time again?

Pondering over the matter for some time, Feng Xun was still unable to make sense of the situation, so he gave up on it altogether. Turning his attention back to the charred black fellow, he couldn't help but feel deeply touched within. Back then, he had attempted to teach the other party a lesson to bring honor back to the Combat Master Hall, and yet, the other party was still willing to cast aside their differences and save him in this crucial moment.

Just recalling what he had done previously left him deeply ashamed. He really did not know how he should face the other party after that.

It was no wonder Luo Ruoxin had chosen the other party over him. If he were Luo Ruoxin, he would have made the same decision as well!

Hu!

Not too long later, the lightning in the sky was finally contained within the Lightning Elemental Orb, and Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a flick of his wrist, he stowed the orb back into his storage ring.

Stretching his slightly stiffened body, he was just about to drive his zhenqi to recuperate from his injuries when he saw Feng Xun walking up to him.

"Principal Zhang, you have my deepest gratitude for saving my life." Feng Xun bowed down deeply.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly waved his hand in embarrassment. "There's no need to stand on ceremony."

While he had only done it due to the compelling circumstances then, it was a fact that

he had knocked the other party out thrice and electrocuted him once. Even at this moment, the other party's body was still convulsing non-stop. That was probably an aftereffect from the brick smash and electrocution. If the other party were to learn of this matter, would the other party rip him apart then and there?

Forget it, what the other party did not know would not hurt him. It would not be good for them to sour their camaraderie over a trivial matter like this.

However, just because Zhang Xuan did not speak of it, it did not mean that Feng Xun was not going to broach the subject. "Principal Zhang, I would like to ask, did the Stoneleaf King make a move on me while I was unconscious? Somehow, there is a dull pain at the back of my head..."

"That... That's not important at all!" With twitching lips, Zhang Xuan hurriedly shook his head. "Let's return now. Wu shi and the others should have recovered by now..."

With the lightning formation back in the Lightning Elemental Orb, the sky gradually cleared up. Not too long later, they arrived at where Wu shi and the others were hiding. At this moment, they had already left the insides of the Golden Origin Cauldron.

Taking a look at the unconscious Golden Origin Cauldron, Zhang Xuan heaved a deep sigh before stowing it back into his storage ring.

While he had succeeded in waking up Lu Chong and Wei Ruyan, the situation was slightly different for the Golden Origin Cauldron. As an artifact, its spirit was fundamentally different from that of a human's soul, so the means that he had utilized previously would be completely ineffective on it. He would have to find a higher tier Blacksmith Guild and gather the books there to find a solution for it.

"Principal Zhang has managed to kill the Stoneleaf King..." Returning to the crowd, Feng Xun shared the joyous news with the expedition team. In an instant, flabbergasted looks surfaced all around them.

Even Wu shi had been unable to stand against the Stoneleaf King's strength back then, and yet, Zhang Xuan had actually succeeded in killing the latter and even resolved the lightning formation. This was truly inconceivable. They could not help but turn to look at Zhang Xuan with gazes of admiration.

Zhang Xuan had initially intended to explain the situation to them, but eventually, he decided against it.

It was hard to explain how he managed to turn the Jadeleaf King against the Stoneleaf King, so revealing this matter could potentially bring him significant trouble. Since that was the case, he might as well remain silent about it.

"Most of you haven't recuperated fully from your injuries yet, and the path ahead is bound to be more dangerous than ever." Noting that there were still quite a few people who were severely wounded, Zhang Xuan proposed, "Why don't we just rest here for the night? We can proceed after we have fully recovered."

After what they had been through, the expedition team also knew that the ancient domain was filled with danger at every corner, and they would have to be in their peak state if they wanted to remain alive. Thus, they nodded in agreement and sat back down to recuperate from their injuries.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan found an opportunity to head to a remote location alone to let Luo Ruoxin out while entering the Myriad Anthive Nest himself.

Hu!

The Lightning Elemental Orb appeared in his hand.

With a thought, he drew his soul out from his glabella before grabbing the Lightning Elemental Orb.

Previously, he had used the lightning formation to temper his soul, and the effects had been considerable. Since he had obtained the Lightning Elemental Orb, the very core of the lightning formation, and he had some time on his hands, it was a good opportunity for him to cultivate and advance his soul cultivation.

Gazing at the condensed lightning packed into the orb, Zhang Xuan grasped the orb tightly with his soul before driving the Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzz!

Streak after streak of lightning began surging out from the Lightning Elemental Orb and into his soul, tempering it.

An hour later, his soul compressed down from seven meters to six meters, and his soul cultivation advanced up to Nascent Saint intermediate stage.

Two hours later, his soul was compressed down to five meters, and his soul cultivation had reached Nascent Saint advanced stage.

Four hours later, his soul was four meters, and his soul cultivation was at Nascent Saint pinnacle!

While his soul had grown smaller, the soul energy within was purer than ever. On top of that, it was imbued with the Power of Lightning, giving it an incredibly powerful presence.

With just his soul cultivation alone, he could probably defeat a Saint 2-dan pinnacle expert.

My soul, body, and zhenqi cultivation have reached Nascent Saint pinnacle.

After cultivating for a while longer, Zhang Xuan realized that if he were to continue tempering his soul without any subsequent cultivation technique, he could very well face unexpected problems in his soul cultivation. Thus, he returned his soul back to his body, and a satisfied smile appeared on his face.

Within less than a single day after entering the ancient domain, he had managed to raise his physical body cultivation and soul cultivation to Nascent Saint pinnacle. This expedition had truly been a fruitful one for him.

If it had been anywhere else, who knew how long it would have taken him to achieve this feat?

"Here, the Lightning Elemental Orb is an extremely powerful artifact for cultivating one's soul. You should cultivate a bit as well!" After advancing his soul cultivation, Zhang Xuan tossed the Lightning Elemental Orb to his clone before leaving the Anthive Nest and returning back to the expedition team.

After a period of rest, the expedition members had mostly recovered from their wounds, and they exuded an aura of vigor.

"Let's continue our journey!" Wu shi said, and the expedition team swiftly got up and began making their way forward.

The route ahead of them mainly consisted of a barren plain.

After walking some distance, Wu shi suddenly came to a halt. He turned to the young man beside him and asked, "Principal Zhang, does this look familiar to you?"

As he said those words, he pointed to the area just ahead of him.

Embedded in the ground was a sword. Forcefully snapped by something, only the top half of it was left.

Taking a closer look at the surroundings, there were some marks of battle around them. Some parts were buried under a layer of dirt, but it was still easily discernible.

"No, I don't think I have seen it before..." Taking a look at it, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Just like the Glacier Rain Sword, the sword pierced in the ground had reached Half Saint as well. However, its appearance was unfamiliar to Zhang Xuan, and he was certain that he had never seen it before.

Wo Tianqiong walked over and remarked, "That is Zhang Yinqiu's weapon. He used it once in a duel with me."

As the principal of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy, he had rather close ties with the old principal, and they had often met one another. As such, he was well aware of the weapons in the old principal's possession.

"It belongs to the old principal?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Yes, that's definitely his weapon!" Wu Ran and Shen Pingchao stepped forward and nodded in agreement.

"Since the old principal's weapon has fallen it, it means that his expedition team must have walked down this route as well... Let's move on!"

The eyes of the crowd lit up in excitement.

This was the first time that they had found traces of the old principal after entering the ancient domain, and they could not help but feel a little agitated within.

They hastened their footsteps, but it did not take long before they stopped once more.

Ahead of them was a massive sandstorm. What was particularly eerie about it was that the sandstorm was pitch-black. Without even approaching it, the crowd could not help but feel shivers running down their spines.

"What's that?"

"I have no idea either..."

Even though they did not recognize what the black sandstorm ahead of them was, they could feel the sheer power that was harnessed within it, and it left them feeling deeply apprehensive.

After a moment of silence, Wo Tianqiong suddenly spoke up with an awful look on his face. "That is the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!"

The crowd frowned in confusion. "Black Sandstorm of Oblivion?"

"Un. It is an extremely dangerous sandstorm that possesses extraordinarily potent corrosion capability. Any existence that steps into it will be swiftly reduced into nothing." After a moment of hesitation, Wo Tianqiong continued. "If you don't believe me, take a look at this..."

After saying those words, he whipped out a Spirit pinnacle sword and tossed it into the sandstorm.

Tzzzzzz!

As soon as the sword was tossed into the sandstorm, innumerable black spots appeared on it, as if it was rusty from being soaked in rainwater for many days.

After which, with a swift wave of his hand, Wo Tianqiong retrieved the sword with his zhenqi. He flicked on it lightly.

Kacha!

The incomparably sturdy Spirit pinnacle sword immediately shattered into innumerable pieces.

"This..."

The faces of the crowd distorted in horror.

Spirit pinnacle weapons were rare even among Tier-1 Empire, and yet, it did not even survive more than a few breaths within the sandstorm before being torn to pieces. Wasn't the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion a little too frightening?

"Is there any way that we can bypass this sandstorm?" one of the combat masters asked with a frown.

Guild Leader Han took a closer look at the sandstorm, and he shook his head bitterly. "I'm afraid that is impossible..."

Chapter 1055

Luo Ruoxin's Suggestion

"Impossible?"

The crowd turned their gazes over.

"Since the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion stands in our path, it is likely that it is a trial that we are supposed undergo. If we do not clear this, we will only be able to loiter around the outskirts of the ancient domain, unable to enter its depths," said Guild Leader Han.

"Un." Hearing his words, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

That was indeed the case.

Through the past experiences, he had come to realize that the ancient domain was built in a way such that only one who had cleared the trial before them could activate the formation that led to the next level. If there was no one among them who could clear the trial, they would be stuck on the spot.

As that was the fundamental design of the ancient domain, there was no way to circumvent the trials through wits.

Not to mention, the person who had designed the ancient domain was most likely Ancient Sage Qiu Wu himself. How could an expert of his caliber possibly leave behind any openings that they would be able to exploit?

Taking a step back, even if there was truly an opening they found that they could exploit, it was more likely that it would be a trap created by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. For breaking his rules, they might find themselves being placed through an even harsher trial than the one before them.

"Based on the traces, it is certain that Zhang Yinqiu and the others must have stepped through the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion as well. But... how did they do it?" Wu shi surveyed the surroundings for a moment before frowning deeply.

Since the old principal's sword had been found alongside marks of battle in the vicinity, it was apparent that the old principal's expedition team had passed through the area they were in.

But the sandstorm before them was a terrifying existence that could corrode even Spirit pinnacle weapons! How could any cultivators survive within it? Even if one could withstand the sandstorm for a short moment, who could say for sure how far the sandstorm spanned? No matter how he looked at it, it seemed like it was nigh impossible to clear this trial!

Paying no heed to the anxiety of the crowd, Zhang Xuan began assessing the sandstorm before him carefully as well.

The Black Sandstorm of Oblivion was similar to the field of lightning that he had encountered before—it was a formation as well. However, just like before, as the area it spanned was simply too big and his cultivation was too low, he was unable to break the formation even with the knowledge of its flaws.

A moment later, he shook his head helplessly as well.

The conclusion that he had come to was the same as Guild Leader Han's. There was no way for them to advance forward other than to brave through the black sandstorm!

While the crowd were conflicted and distressed over their present circumstances, Luo Ruoxin suddenly spoke up.

"Have you all thought about how we encountered quite a few Otherworldly Demons in the previous trial, but here, there is not a single one to be seen? If my conjecture holds true, we could have been heading in the wrong direction all along."

"We have been heading in the wrong direction all along?" asked one of the master teachers, unable to comprehend what Luo Ruoxin was driving at.

"That's right. We have been chasing after the trail left behind by Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu, but... if the Otherworldly Demons are already ahead of us, the trail that we see before us might not necessarily be authentic. If that's the case, shouldn't we search for the Otherworldly Demon's trail instead? There is a good chance that it will be safer that way." Luo Ruoxin presented her analysis.

"That..." The crowd was taken aback by those words.

"Indeed, Luo shi's words make perfect sense!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

As one of the central goals of their expedition was to find the whereabouts of the old principal and save the other party if he was still alive, they had been on the lookout for the old principal's trail all along, thinking that it would lead them to the old principal. It was a logical deduction, but if the Otherworldly Demons had intentionally scattered the old principal's possessions around to lay a trap for them... they could very well have been headed toward grave danger!

So far, he had managed to tame one and kill seven of the Ten Great Kings of Qingtian Lineage, but the two remaining Upper Five Kings would be far more difficult to defeat. Even though he had missed the most powerful Skyleaf King at the Poison Hall, he had heard that the latter was a true Leaving Aperture realm expert, an existence beyond their current means to deal with.

Typically speaking, after obtaining the map in the Poison Hall, the Skyleaf King should have entered the ancient domain. Yet, he hadn't seen any trace of the other party ever since he entered the ancient domain.

Considering how the Skyleaf King could have dealt with them easily but had yet to do so... Perhaps, by using the map in his hand, the other party had managed to enter the ancient domain before them and was currently ahead of them.

If so, the path that the other party had taken was bound to be the safest!

"Let me take a look..."

Flying into the air, Zhang Xuan began assessing his surroundings carefully with his Eye of Insight.

Previously, he had been too concerned with finding the old principal's trail, so he had not noticed anything else. However, taking a closer look around them, he swiftly found that there were indeed quite a few suspicious details.

A group of Otherworldly Demons had passed through the land they were currently on just a few hours ago.

Zhang Xuan descended to the ground and requested, "Feng Xun, I need to borrow your Undefined Mirror!"

The Otherworldly Demons had intentionally concealed their trail, and due to his lower cultivation, there was a limit to what his Eye of Insight could see as well. He could barely make out that others had passed through the area a few hours ago, but he could not discern for sure the direction they were headed in.

If it was just a few hours, the Undefined Mirror of the Combat Master Hall should still be able to work its wonders.

"Un." Nodding, Feng Xun passed the mirror over and swiftly filled Zhang Xuan in on how the mirror should be utilized.

Following Feng Xun's instructions, Zhang Xun bit his finger and dripped a droplet of blood on the Undefined Mirror.

Weng!

An arrow surfaced in the Undefined Mirror, and after flickering for a brief moment, it pointed toward a certain direction.

After walking in the direction pointed out by the Undefined Mirror for some time, Zhang Xun suddenly came to a halt. Turning to face the crowd behind him, he said, "The direction pointed out by the Undefined Mirror indicates that they have entered the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion through here."

"They entered through here? Are they unafraid of the might of the sandstorm?" one of the combat masters asked in bewilderment.

"I don't have an answer to that either." Zhang Xun shook his head.

Through the Undefined Mirror, they could confirm that the Otherworldly Demons did enter the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion through the area.

But after careful examination, Zhang Xun discerned that the area before him wasn't a location where a flaw of the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion could be found. The sandstorm was still as fearsome as ever, so it was perplexing to him why the Otherworldly Demons would choose to enter from this point.

At that moment, Wu Shi stepped forward and said, "Let me give it a try. Perhaps, there might be a hidden passageway amid the fearsome sandstorm."

Guild Leader Han pondered for a moment before nodding in agreement to Wu shi's decision. "Be careful."

What Wu shi had suggested was something that often occurred within formations.

There were many formations where the Life Gate was hidden in the most perilous of locations, unable to be detected through any means except by stepping into it personally.

"Un." Wu shi nodded. Taking a deep breath, he drove his zhenqi, and silver armor gradually materialized around him.

Saint-tier battle technique, Silver Armor of the True Dragon!

It was his strongest defense battle technique, and it granted him an all-around defense as well. As such, it was the ideal shield to fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion.

He took a step in.

Kacha! Kacha! Kacha!

As soon as he stepped into sandstorm, a deafening ruckus reminiscent of a violent storm mercilessly battering a banana tree 1 filled the air.

Barely after taking eight steps forward, Wu shi face paled, and he hurriedly rushed back out. As soon as he left the perimeter of the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, his zhenqi armor immediately cracked before dissipating entirely. His face was entirely pale, and his footsteps were unstable. He hurriedly sat down to condition himself.

After a moment of recuperation, Wu shi turned the crowd and shook his head. "This won't work at all. Not only is the sandstorm no weaker than where we were previously, it is even stronger! There is no way we can pass through this."

The amount of zhenqi one had to exert to fend off the sandstorm was immense. He could at least enter forty meters deep into the lava, but here, eight steps were already his limit.

"This is bizarre. How did the Otherworldly Demon manage to get in unharmed?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even if the Skyleaf King and the Scarletleaf King were the two strongest experts of the Ten Great Kings, surely it should have been beyond their means to step right into the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion without getting injured?

It did not make any sense!

"Perhaps... they used some kind of artifact to ward off the sandstorm!" Guild Leader Han suggested.

"Artifact?"

"Un. As powerful as the sandstorm is, there are still artifacts out there that can fend it off. For one, if we had a Saint high-tier artifact here with us right now, we would be able to run right in without any fear of getting injured," Guild Leader Han said.

The Black Sandstorm of Oblivion was a terrifying existence against Spirit pinnacle and even Saint low-tier artifacts, but even it could do nothing to faze the powerful Saint high-tier artifacts.

If they had an artifact of that caliber, they would not have needed to bother with finding the Life Gate of the formation at all. They could easily have run right through the sandstorm.

"Saint high-tier artifact... Where are we supposed to find that?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Despite going through a flawless reforging session, the Golden Origin Cauldron barely met the mark as a Saint intermediate-tier weapon. Given so, it was not too hard to imagine how difficult smithing a Saint high-tier artifact would be. In fact, it could be said that it was an impossible feat for anyone who had not achieved the proficiency equivalent to an 8-star blacksmith!

Luo Ruoxin examined the situation for a moment before saying calmly, "Actually, aside from Saint high-tier artifacts, there are some unique artifacts that might work particularly well against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion as well. Considering how the sandstorm carries the property of corrosion, it would be hard for most physical artifact to withstand its might. However, it would be a different story for soul-type artifacts. Souls are impervious to the corruption caused by the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, so through the soul energy that soul-type artifacts emanate, it should be possible to keep the sandstorm at bay."

As one who could very well be the offspring of a Sage Clan, it was not surprising for her to be well-versed in such knowledge.

"Soul-type artifacts? But such artifacts are harder to find than Saint high-tier artifacts," a combat master remarked.

As long as a decently proficient blacksmith had sufficient materials at hand, smithing a Saint high-tier artifact would not be a problem. However, the same could not be said about a soul-type artifact.

Most of the soul-type artifacts in circulation were formed by the workings of nature due to the immense difficulty in smithing them. In fact, blacksmiths who were capable of smithing soul-type artifacts possessed an extremely high standing in society, comparable to an equivalently ranked master teacher or even above that.

"Indeed! It's simply too difficult to find soul-type artifacts. We don't even have a single one of those in our Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion!"

"The same for our Yunxu Master Teacher Academy as well..."

The crowd nodded in agreement.

Even if soul-type artifacts could really be used to fend against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, it was still futile if they did not have one in their possession.

"I heard that the Hongyuan royal family has a soul-type plant known as the Bodhi Saint Tree. If only I knew that we would encounter such a trial in the ancient domain, I would have surely borrowed it from them in advance." Mu shi sighed deeply in lamentation.

"How could we have possibly known that there would be so many peculiar formations in the ancient domain?" Wu shi shook his head.

"Actually, that probably wouldn't have worked either. I've heard that the Hongyuan royal family's Bodhi Saint Tree is dying, so it probably wouldn't be strong enough to ward off the sandstorm either. Besides, it's the very foundation of the strength of their royal family, so there's no way that they would have willingly lent it to us," Wo Tianqiong said.

"Indeed. How could they be willing to lend us something that directly concerns the

survival of their monarchy? Unless we were to snatch it forcefully or offer them something equivalent in value to it, there is no way that it would have worked!"

Before the group could finish letting out their regrets, Zhang Xuan suddenly spoke with a dazed look on his face. "What did you say? The Bodhi Saint Tree would work as well?"

"Of course! While it's not a soul-type artifact, it's still a soul-type plant. Naturally, it will still emanate soul energy, thus helping us fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!" Guild Leader Han replied. He was just about to continue speaking when the young man before him suddenly flicked his hand, and a giant tree appeared on his palm. "Will this work?"

"That is... a whole Bodhi Saint Tree?"

The crowd was dumbfounded.

"Principal Zhang, did you... ransack the Hongyuan royal family?"

Chapter 1056

Trap

Anyone who had visited Hongyuan City in the past would know the significance of the Bodhi Saint Tree to the Hongyuan royal family. It was the very foundation of the Yu Clan's rule. As such, they were reluctant to allow anyone to come close to it, let alone borrow it.

Given so, it was no wonder their thoughts would wander when they saw Zhang Xuan taking out an entire Bodhi Saint Tree with a casual flick of the wrist.

"Of course not! I planted the tree myself..." Not expecting the crowd to have such wild imaginations, Zhang Xuan was at a loss for words.

Naturally, the Bodhi Saint Tree in his hand was not the one from the royal palace but one that he had nurtured himself through the Bodhi Seed. He had been cultivating it in his Myriad Anthive Nest all along, and he was just retrieving it from there.

After hearing that Zhang Xuan did not forcefully snatch the Bodhi Saint Tree, the crowd heaved a sigh of relief. They were afraid that this would cause a conflict between the Master Teacher Pavilion and the Hongyuan royal family.

After the initial shock, a wave of excitement gradually spread across the crowd as they realized that they might have found the key to crossing the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion.

Wu shi stepped forward and said, "Let me give it a try and see if it's effective."

So far, it was still nothing but a hypothesis that a soul-type artifact would be able to fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. It still required some testing to confirm whether it would work or not.

Wu shi took the Bodhi Saint Tree from Zhang Xuan's hand, and driving his zhenqi, he propped the massive tree up and held it over his head. After which, he infused a surge of soul energy into the tree trunk, and the tree swiftly emanated a warm and comfortable glow.

The Bodhi Saint Tree did not just have the ability to nourish souls. It could also draw forth a peculiar strength if one infused one's soul energy into it.

After the preparations were done, Wu shi began making his way toward the black sandstorm.

Under the embrace of the warm glow of the tree, Wu shi stepped into the violent black sandstorm. This time, he was not battered by the sandstorm. The warm glow had neutralized the sandstorm that was heading his way. What Luo Ruoxin had said was true, soul-type artifacts were indeed effective against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!

"This is wonderful!"

"The Otherworldly Demons must have prepared a soul-type artifact in advance knowing that there was such a trial, thus allowing them to walk straight through the sandstorm without any trouble."

"With this, we will be able to pass through the sandstorm easily as well."

The eyes of the crowd lit up at that sight.

At the same time, a mystery that had been plaguing Zhang Xuan's mind suddenly unraveled before his eyes.

He had been wondering why the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would go to the trouble of instructing You Xu to poison the Hongyuan royal family's Bodhi Saint Tree. Back then, it seemed like an excessive action—it was not like the Hongyuan Empire posed a significant threat to them. However, from the looks of it now... it seemed that they were just taking precautions.

As long as the Bodhi Saint Tree died, the master teachers would be helpless before the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. They would be left standing helplessly at the starting line, lamenting their helplessness.

However, despite all of their calculations, they had failed to factor in Zhang Xuan's involvement. Who would have thought that someone would actually succeed in reviving the Bodhi Saint Tree and obtain the Bodhi Seed? Not to mention, to cultivate the Bodhi Seed into the mature Bodhi Saint Tree within such a short period of time...

Somehow, the aid that he had provided to the royal family back then ended up helping

him in this crucial moment.

While he was deep in thought, Wu shi had finally returned from the black sandstorm.

At this moment, he did not look as excited as the others did. With a pale face, he placed the Bodhi Saint Tree back down onto the ground. Facing the crowd with a bitter smile, he said, "Infusing soul energy into the Bodhi Saint Tree does allow us to fend off the sandstorm, and the area of effect of the glow is sufficient for all of us to pass through simultaneously... However, this depletes soul energy simply far too quickly. Even with my current strength, I can only progress around a hundred meters before being sapped dry."

"A hundred meters?"

The crowd frowned.

From the looks of it, the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion covered at least several kilometers. As a Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle expert, Wu shi possessed the strongest soul of their expedition team. If even he only had sufficient soul energy to fuel the Bodhi Saint Tree to travel a hundred meters, there was no way they would be able to get to the other side.

It was not easy for a member of their expedition team to possess a soul-type plant, and they had also verified that it was effective against the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. Were they really going to stumble here just because they did not have sufficient soul energy to push on?

"Let me give it a try..." Zhang Xuan took the Bodhi Saint Tree and propped it up above him. After which, he sent a surge of rich spiritual energy into it.

After roughly gauging the rate of depletion of his soul energy, Zhang Xuan smiled and said, "Everyone, gather under the tree. Make sure not to wander off!"

Right after saying those words, he began making his way toward the black sandstorm.

The crowd glanced at one another with conflicted expressions, but considering how confident Zhang Xuan was, they swiftly made up their minds and followed suit.

As soon as they stepped in, they could feel the calamitous power of the black sandstorm sweeping toward them, desiring to devour their existences whole. But

when it came into contact with the warm glow of the Bodhi Saint Tree, the black sandstorm seemed to dissipate with a flicker.

Seeing that the sandstorm was unable to make its way through the Bodhi Saint Tree's defenses, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before proceeding forward.

Due to the intangible nature of souls, it was often viewed a far less effective defensive means as compared to utilizing one's zhenqi or physical body. Yet, to think that it would be the key to fending off the devastating sandstorm before their eyes... A cyclical balance of power, the world sure worked in wondrous ways.

As Zhang Xuan marched forward, he discreetly sneaked a peek at the young lady not too far away from him. Luo shi seems a little too knowledgeable... Is she really just a 6-star master teacher?

Be it seeing through the Spatial Formation or figuring out that soul-type artifacts could fend off the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, those were things that even Wu shi and Guild Leader Han were ignorant of! And yet, Luo Ruoxin seemed well-versed in such matters. The depth and breadth of her knowledge was truly astonishing.

Is this the capability that the offspring of Sage Clans wield? If that is truly the case, it was the right call to have Yuan Tao return to his clan, Zhang Xuan thought.

He had been a little reluctant to part with Yuan Tao back then, but it seemed like that was for the best. Not only would the latter be able to awaken his Emperor's Bloodline swiftly, his fighting prowess would also rocket.

Under the protection of the Bodhi Saint Tree, the crowd advanced steadily without any worries. However, after walking for some time, they gradually noticed that something was amiss, and shocked gazes were beginning to gather upon the young man before them.

So far... they should have already traveled around three hundred meters? And yet, the fellow before them did not seem to be exhausted in the least. In fact, he even had the leisure to allow his mind to wander, not even slightly strained by his exertion. Weren't the reserves of his soul energy a little too big?

This was especially so for Wu shi. At this point, his lower jaw was already on the verge of falling to the ground.

He had personally experienced the fearsome power of the black sandstorm himself, and it had caused his soul energy to deplete even before he could get far. On the other hand, Principal Zhang had extended his glow to cover everyone—a significantly larger rate of depletion as compared to his—and they had already traveled for more than three hundred meters now, and yet, the other party did not seem fatigued in the slightest.

It was truly hard for him to believe that a Nascent Saint possessed even greater soul energy than a Saint 4-dan expert.

That fellow is a true monster, Wu shi thought bitterly.

To think that he had intended to leave such a formidable figure out of their expedition team at one point in time... Now that he thought of it, he could not help but feel deeply ashamed of his ignorance then.

It was fortunate that he had eventually chosen to bring the other party along, or else they probably wouldn't even have passed the lava at the very start, let alone reach this point.

If I can only persist till a hundred meters, even if he's blessed with an innately powerful soul, five hundred meters should be his limit.

Thus, as they advanced forward, Wu shi kept a close eye on the young man before him, prepared to make a substitution should the latter run out of strength. Yet, they trod past the five hundred meters mark, and there were still no signs of exhaustion on the Zhang Xuan's face. It seemed as if the depletion of his soul energy that he had incurred so far was not even worth mentioning!

600 meters!

800 meters!

1,000 meters!

It did not take too long for them to travel a whole 5,000 meters. Walking at the very front, Zhang Xuan still had the same nonchalant expression on his face, as if the depletion of his soul energy was insignificant. Not only so, his footsteps also seemed to be getting lighter and lighter...

Wait a moment, h-he... he can't be cultivating while walking, can he? Wu shi eyes nearly bulged out from his eyes.

A rate of depletion that even he was unable to withstand, and yet, the other party could easily bear it and even cultivate while he was at it. Monster! That freaking monster!

Forget it. If I continue comparing myself with him, it is just a matter of time before I die of despondency. Consoling himself that the young man before him was an anomaly, Wu shi was finally able to soothe the turmoil in his heart.

With Zhang Xuan's seemingly endless supply of soul energy, the end of the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion was soon in sight. There, a beautiful and resplendent manor reminiscent of a celestial palace could be seen. Floating before an enormous waterfall, it left the crowd feeling as if they were stepping into a heavenly realm.

"How is that done?" Feng Xun widened his eyes in disbelief.

A cultivator had to reach Saint realm before they could free themselves from the shackles of gravity and soar in the sky. Yet, for an entire palace to be floating in midair, creating such a mystical and wondrous sight... Just how powerful was the person who had achieved such a feat?

This was too exaggerated!

After a moment of pondering, Guild Leader Han said, "It is a clever manipulation of space. Even though it seems like it is floating in midair to our eyes, its true form could be something very different from that."

Hearing those words, the crowd slowly nodded.

Limited by their experiences and knowledge, it was extremely difficult for them to comprehend advanced formations. What seemed bewildering and inconceivable to them could very well be realized at a higher level.

"This is probably the core of the ancient domain. Let's hurry over to take a look!" Wo Tianqiong said with a gladdened smile.

They had overcome numerous trials in order to reach that point. Surely, they should have been nearing the end by now.

"Alright!"

The spirited crowd quickly made their way over to the celestial palace.

Not too long later, a massive heavenly gate that carried an air of divinity appeared before their eyes. Stepping through it, they immediately felt rich spiritual energy gushing in their direction.

Stepping into the celestial palace, Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully. "Why do I feel like there is something peculiar about this place?"

While the entire building was shrouded in an air of divinity, Zhang Xuan could not help but feel that there was something off with the place.

"Peculiar? Principal Zhang, it must be your imagination this time around..." Laughing heartily, Wu shi was just about to continue speaking when the ground abruptly jolted beneath them.

In an instant, the resplendent celestial palace seemed to have suddenly turned into a living hell. An air of desolation swiftly permeated the area.

Sou sou sou!

An overwhelming aura of maliciousness swept across their surroundings like a raging storm. Following which, surge after surge of sword qi burst forth, weaving a huge net that left them trapped like insects in a cage.

Wu shi's eyes narrowed as he hurriedly bellowed, "Damn it, it's a formation trap by the Otherworldly Demons!"

Only the Otherworldly Demons could possibly release such a sharp and cold aura of maliciousness!

Peng peng peng peng!

In the next moment, three Nascent Saint combat masters were sliced into pieces under a simultaneous burst of sword qi. Even Feng Xun's shoulder was wounded by the sword qi, causing a stream of crimson blood to flow down his arm.

The formation had changed so swiftly that there were already casualties even before

they could process what was going on. Swiftly recovering from his daze, Guild Leader Han quickly roared, with veins popping from his temples, "Defense!"

"Yes!"

In that instant, they all realized that they had fallen into a trap laid by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. They swiftly drew their weapons and drove their zhenqi.

Ding ding ding ding!

No matter what, their expedition team was still made up of elite master teachers and combat masters. Even though they had been caught off guard, the fighting prowess they wielded as a whole was still spectacular once they got back on track.

With their collective might, the sword qi aimed toward them was easily deflected away.

"To be able to come here so quickly, I must say that you are not too bad. However, I'm afraid that this place will be your burial ground..."

At this moment, a cold and eerie voice sounded in the air.

Following which, the horrified voice of the Violetleaf King sounded in Zhang Xuan's ears.

"Scarletleaf King..."

Chapter 1057

Illusory-Slaughter Formation

"Scarletleaf King? The one who is ranked second of the Upper Five Kings?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes warily.

Having witnessed the power wielded by the Jadeleaf King and the Stoneleaf King, Zhang Xuan had been feeling a little apprehensive about facing the two strongest experts of the Upper Five Kings. Who knew that he would meet one of them in such a situation?

"Who are you? Stop putting up a farce and get out here!"

While Zhang Xuan was communicating with the Violetleaf King, Wu shi scanned the surroundings with sharp eyes reminiscent of a hawk. In the next moment, seemingly having confirmed the location of the enemy, his eyebrows shot up and the sword in his hand flew forth amidst a resounding battle cry.

Huala!

A powerful blast of sword qi burst forward with swiftness reminiscent of a shooting star, tearing a vacuum through the air. Upon coming into contact with the wall, it immediately ripped out a massive hole.

"Strong!"

This was the first time Zhang Xuan was seeing Wu shi fight for real, and the fighting prowess that the latter wielded was indeed formidable.

Along the route, the 7-star high-tier master teacher had either been injured or was on the way to becoming injured, leaving Zhang Xuan with a notion that the other party was unworthy of his rank. However, the astounding might that the other party wielded in this very moment dispelled whatever doubts he harbored regarding the other party.

It still couldn't match up to the Primordial Spirit Jadeleaf King, but it was definitely on par with the Stoneleaf King.

If both were to clash with one another at full strength, there was no saying who would emerge victorious!

Boom!

Upon striking through the wall, the sword qi abruptly exploded, causing the building in front of them to collapse entirely, raising a huge cloud of dust. However, there was not a figure to be seen.

"There's no one there?"

Not expecting that he would make a lapse in his judgement, Wu shi's face darkened as he hurriedly scanned his surroundings once more warily.

"Hahaha, you wish to challenge me? You are still far too young for that!" that voice sounded once more.

Huala!

Halfway through those words, Wu shi had already made a move once more.

This time, his movement was even swifter. His sword blurred into a series of afterimages as it crept past several hundred meters in just the blink of an eye before being brought down powerfully. BAM! As if slicing through tofu, a giant tear ripped its way through the buildings, parting the area into two distinct halves.

However, just like before, there was still not a single silhouette to be seen. It was as if the person who had just spoken didn't exist at all.

"Don't waste your efforts. Even if you were to tear the whole place down, you still won't be able to find me!" the Scarletleaf King laughed heartily upon seeing Wu shi's futile struggling.

Hu!

Right after saying those words, the collapsed buildings abruptly joined back together with one another, as if time had been rewound. In the blink of an eye, it was already reverted back to its original state.

"T-this... How can this be possible?"

The eyes of the crowd narrowed in disbelief at the ridiculous sight before them.

With their own eyes, they had seen how the powerful might of Wu shi devastated the buildings. How could they possibly recover in the blink of an eye?

Furthermore, it was a perfect recovery. The buildings had been reverted to the form identical to how they were in when they first entered!

"We must have stepped into some kind of powerful formation..." Wu shi remarked warily.

The crowd nodded.

"Could we be in an Illusory Formation?" Wo Tianqiong asked.

He had taken formation master as one of his supporting occupations as well, but the sight before his eyes was simply too bizarre. It was difficult for even him to confirm what was going on.

"Yes, we should be in an Illusory Formation." Guild Leader Han nodded. "Most probably, we have already succumbed to it when we first entered. In other words, everything that is before us in this instant is fake! It won't make any difference no matter how we attack them!"

"It won't make any difference?"

"Un. Think about it this way. No matter whether those buildings are collapsed or standing, they are still part of an illusion, so it wouldn't make any difference to the current plight we are in. As long as we are unable to see through the essence of the formation, we will be stuck in this illusion forever, unable to escape..." Guild Leader Han explained with his fists clenched tightly in nervousness.

"This..."

Hearing those words, the bodies of the crowd tensed up.

If they were truly in an Illusory Formation, wasn't the image before them a little too realistic? They could be considered as elites amongst the master teachers and combat masters, and every single one of them possessed superior eyes of discernment. Yet, for none of them to be unable to discern that they had fallen into an illusion before...

Just the thought of it left chills running down their spines.

Was this the strength that advanced formations wielded?

It was already extremely difficult for them to escape from a realistic Illusory Formation, but to make things worse, it seemed like it was under someone else's control... Would they really still be able to escape from it?

"This..." Zhang Xuan's face turned grim as well.

He did notice that there was something amiss when he first stepped into the celestial palace, but even he hadn't noticed that they were in an illusion!

With a thought, he activated his Eye of Insight and scanned his surroundings. However, the buildings around him still looked the same as ever, there was no difference from before.

All of these buildings... are real? Does that mean that we aren't in an Illusory Formation? Zhang Xuan was bewildered by the conflicting conclusions before him.

The Eye of Insight could see right into the crux of anything. If they were truly in an Illusory Formation, he should be able to see through it via the Eye of Insight easily! How could he have not sensed anything at all?

No, that's not right. Perhaps the formation is too advanced for me at the moment. Due to my low cultivation, I am still unable to see through it via my Eye of Insight... Zhang Xuan reasoned.

The Eye of Insight was indeed powerful, but it was limited by his own cultivation. He couldn't see through anything that was too far beyond him. Take for example, if an 8-star master teacher were to walk past him disguised as a passer-by, he wouldn't be any wiser even if he were to scan the other party with his Eye of Insight.

This seemed to be the case for the Illusory Formation as well.

Most likely, it is a massive formation like the lightning formation and the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion! Zhang Xuan thought.

Larger formations were not only more powerful, it also made it more difficult for others to analyze and discern it as well due to the sheer scale of it. It was probably

because of this that the entire expedition team failed to notice that they had stepped into a formation itself.

Knowing that the formation was beyond the means of his Eye of Insight to analyze, Zhang Xuan deactivated his Eye of Insight. After which, turning his gaze to his surroundings, he muttered silently, "Flaws!"

While the Eye of Insight might be unable to see through the formation around him, it shouldn't pose a problem to the Library of Heaven's Path.

Hu!

With a jolt of his mind, a book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly immersed his consciousness in and browsed through the book.

"The 172nd Door, a segment of a larger formation. There are eight flaws in total. No.1,..."

After reading through the book, Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

The Library of Heaven's Path was indeed unaffected by the tier of the formation, but... the formation was simply too huge! For one, the area that they could see was only one small portion of its entirety.

According to the book, it was the 172nd Door, which meant that there should be at least 171 doors identical to the one they were in, or even more!

For there to be so many doors... it would still be fine if they were to step into a Life Gate, but what if they were to accidentally enter a Death Gate? They might just lose their lives before they know it!

The formations that I have encountered so far operated as a whole, so the Library of Heaven's Path compiled a book on the entire formation even when I am just viewing a small portion of it. However, this Illusory Formation seems to be made up of innumerable smaller formations, and these smaller formations can be activated individually. In other words, the formation is only active in areas where it perceives the enemies are at. As such, not even the seemingly omnipotent Library of Heaven's Path is able to discern the entire situation of the formation... Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly together as he analyzed the current situation they were in.

The current Illusory Formation they were trapped in was segmented into many doors, and it seemed like only certain portions of the formation were activated at the current moment. As such, the Library of Heaven's Path viewed the current door they were in as a system by itself and analyzed the door only.

If Zhang Xuan wanted the Library of Heaven's Path to analyze the entire formation, he would have to get an overhead view of the entire formation. As long as he remained trapped within it, he would be unable to see through the crux of the Illusory Formation through the Library of Heaven's Path and determine the most suitable path to escaping from it.

In other words... he wouldn't be able to bank on the Library of Heaven's Path to deal with the current formation he was in unlike previous occasions!

Hualala!

Just as Zhang Xuan was conflicted over the situation before him, a sound reminiscent of a powerful gust of wind echoed in the surroundings. In the next instant, innumerable sword qi abruptly shot forth from all around them.

As if a rain of arrows from thousands and thousands of soldiers, the burst of sword qi sealed the space around them perfectly. The slightest wrong movement they made could very well result in them being sliced into innumerable pieces.

"Everyone, be careful! This isn't just an Illusory Formation but an Illusory-Slaughter Formation!" Guild Leader Han shouted.

Illusory Formation could only induce hallucinations in the minds of those trapped within it, placing them in a distraught state, so the formation in itself didn't pose a threat to those trapped within it. However, an Illusory-Slaughter Formation was a formation which harnessed the functions of both an Illusory Formation and a Slaughter Formation simultaneously. Not only would one's mind be sent into disarray, one would even have to face all kinds of attacks. If one were to get careless within it, one might just end up losing his life.

"Illusory-Slaughter Formation?"

Everyone's faces turned grim. They swiftly drove their zhenqi, preparing themselves to fend off the wave of sword qi headed towards them.

Zhang Xuan was also about to make a move as well when he heard Feng Xun bellowing at the moment, "Combat masters, the Black Tortoise Sword Formation!"

"Yes!"

The remaining nine combat masters quickly stepped forward before brandishing their words simultaneously with incredible harmony.

Hualala!

Swiftly, a spherical barrier reminiscent of a tortoise shell formed around the expedition team.

Ding ding ding ding!

Reminiscent of rain pattering down on a gazebo, the sword qi striking the barrier created a deafening reverberation but none was able to bypass its defense.

"What an incredible sword formation!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in awe upon seeing the sight.

The combat masters weren't too powerful individually, but the synergy in their teamwork was incredible. Their perfect collaboration in the Black Tortoise Sword Formation had allowed them to deflect every single one of the sword qi—a feat which even Zhang Xuan didn't think that he would be able to achieve.

Huala!

After a wave of sword qi, the surroundings abruptly fell silent.

The combat masters withdrew their weapons as they surveyed their surroundings carefully.

"Don't worry, it isn't possible for such attacks to be launched endlessly..." Guild Leader Han said.

It went without saying that each wave of offense would sap the energy reserves within the formation. Without an endless supply of energy, there would eventually come a point where the formation would run out of energy altogether.

Hula!

Right after saying those words, yet another wave of sword qi flew towards them. The combat masters hurriedly put up their formation and deflected the sword qi once more.

Taking the scene into sight, Wu shi frowned. Scanning his surroundings, he declared loudly, "See, your formation is completely useless against us. Why don't you muster the guts to get out here and face me in a proper fight?"

At this moment, they were in the open whereas their enemy was hidden in the dark. It was an extremely disadvantageous position for them. If they could lure the enemy out of his hiding spot, regardless of whether they would be able to kill the other party or not, it could at least lessen the dangers they would face.

"You want me to face you in a proper fight? Hahaha! Sure, escape from here and I will fight you all you want!" the voice burst into laughter, not falling for Wu shi's provocation at all.

Hu!

The air abruptly tensed up, and yet another wave of offense flew towards the expedition team. This time, it wasn't sword qi but saber qi.

Saber qi possessing less penetrative powerful than sword qi, but it harnessed far greater might. Under the furious assault of saber qi, the expedition team found their arms numbing from the powerful impact.

However, the Black Tortoise Sword Formation set up by the combat masters was truly a force to be reckoned with. Once again, it successfully stood its ground against the wave of offense.

After three consecutive waves of saber qi, the surroundings fell silent once more. A short moment later, a leisurely zither melody began sounding in the surroundings. The sound didn't just linger by their ears, it seemed to resonate with their souls as well.

"This is... demonic tune!"

The faces of the expedition team warped in horror.

They had also faced a demonic tune attack back at the Unbounded World, and they were nearly wiped out due to it. It was even worse this time around. They were already in a perilous position, and if they were to fall into a trance under the effects of the demonic tunes, they might just very well lose their lives here.

"What do we do?"

The crowd immediately sealed their six senses, but they found that they were unable to isolate the sound at all. Horrified, their faces paled in anxiety.

Under such circumstances, a demonic tune attack was indeed far more effective than a physical attack.

"AHHHH... I CAN'T HOLD ON ANYMORE..."

Suddenly, a combat master let loose a ferocious roar before abruptly charging forward. He began hacking the sword in his hand around him frenziedly, as if possessed.

"Hu Chen!"

Upon seeing the combat master abruptly rushing out of the formation, Feng Xun immediately roared in alarm. He hurriedly rushed out to drag the other party back into the formation, but in that moment, a sound reminiscent of a powerful gust of wind echoed once more.

Hulala!

Innumerable sword qi burst forth, and before Hu Chen could even react, he was already sliced into many pieces, and his corpse fell heavily onto the ground.

Puhe! Puhe!

With Hu Chen missing, a huge opening appeared in the Black Tortoise Formation. Sword qi managed to bypass the formation through the openings and struck the legs of two combat masters. Crimson blood trickled down their legs and dripped to the ground from their feet.

"Everyone, retreat!"

Bellowing loudly, Wu shi stepped forward, and with a powerful slash, he eradicated all

of the sword qi in the surroundings. After that was done, he turned back to the crowd and said, "Hurry up and treat the casualties, we don't have much time!"

"Alright!"

Nodding, Feng Xun quickly rushed up to his wounded subordinates to treat their wounds.

Chapter 1058

You Are the Skyleaf King (1)

Right after they were done treating the casualties, the demonic tune sounded once more. This time, the zither sound carried an alluring melody that bewitched one's mind, causing one's thoughts to run amok.

"Damn it, it's a type of Beguilement Tune..." Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

Just like formations, demonic tunes could be classified into many categories, too. Beguilement Tune, Illusory Tune, Heavy Tunes, Cacophonous Tune... Of them, Beguilement Tunes were the most widely feared due to their ability to control the minds of others.

In a sense, it worked in a similar manner to the Impartation of Heaven's Will. If a cultivator succumbed to it, they might very well end up doing something beyond their control... and this included self-harm and suicide!

There had once been a Zither Demon who used such a demonic tune to massacre an entire city. This was also one of the reasons the occupation was given the prefix of 'demonic'.

As a 7-star demonic tunist, Zhang Xuan naturally understood how fearsome such a demonic tune could be. The tune that was currently being played had a particularly alluring quality to it, making it extremely easy for an individual to lose themselves in it.

Once they succumbed to the music, they would be completely oblivious to the happenings around them, making them vulnerable targets. If so, their entire expedition team could very well be wiped out there.

Knowing that there was no time to be wasted, Zhang Xuan swiftly flicked his wrist and whipped out a zither. Driving his zhenqi, his fingers nimbly swiped over the strings.

Dong dong dong!

A powerful sound reminiscent of the chiming of a massive bell or the rumbling of

thunder boomed by everyone's ears.

The current situation was different from the one back in the Unbounded World. Zhang Xuan failed to notice the whistling of the wind earlier, and by the time he was aware of the matter, the entire expedition team was already deeply fixated into it. Under that circumstances, given his lacking proficiency in demonic tunes, it was impossible for him to undo its effects with his demonic tunes. If he were to attempt to do so forcefully, it could result in a rebound, inflicting grievous wounds to the others instead.

However, the current situation was that the demonic tune had only started playing a moment ago, and the crowd had not succumbed to it yet. Thus, it was easier for him to deal with it.

As expected, under the loud cacophony, the crowd staggered slightly, and fresh blood spurted from their mouths and noses. They were slightly injured by the rebound between the clash of both tunes, but Zhang Xuan's tune did effectively jolt them back to attention.

"We will die if we remain here. Follow me!" Roaring loudly, Zhang Xuan identified a direction and headed over.

Even though he had no idea where the 172nd Door was located relative to the entire formation, there was one thing certain here. If they remained there, they would only gradually accumulate injuries. Pushed to their limits, they might very well have ended up succumbing like Combat Master Hu Chen earlier, rushing out of the formation in a craze only to be slaughtered by the many burst of sword qi.

No doubt, the other doors were bound to be dangerous as well, but remaining where they were wasn't an option either. It was a risky gamble, but they had no choice but to take it.

Understanding that as well, the crowd followed closely behind Zhang Xuan. Each grasping a sword tightly in their hands, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han surveyed their surroundings cautiously, ready to retaliate should they be attacked.

The both of them were Saint 4-dan experts who had already forged their Primordial Spirits. With their prowess, they could easily fend off the barrage of sword qi in moments of crisis.

Ding ding ding ding!

While proceeding forward, another burst of sword qi assaulted the crowd. However, with the two experts moving simultaneously to fend off the offense, the crowd managed to overcome it successfully and leave swiftly.

After crossing two wide corridors, Zhang Xuan took a look around him before frowning. A moment later, he abruptly dashed right into the wall ahead of him.

Just as the crowd was bewildered by Zhang Xuan's sudden action, the wall suddenly collapsed to reveal a huge courtyard.

Walking into the courtyard, the sound of the demonic tunes abruptly vanished, as if they had bypassed the demarcated zone of its area of effect. At the same time, the ferocious onslaught of sword qi stopped as well. It was as if the relentless assault against them had never happened at all.

"The onslaught of the sword qi has vanished, and the zither sound has stopped as well."

"Did we manage to flee from the Illusory-Slaughter Formation?"

Wo Tianqiong and the others could not help but ask with a hint of hope in their voices.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "That's not it; we are still in the formation. It's just that the formation is divided into many smaller ones, and we have escaped from one into another."

Grade-8 formations were not grade-8 formations for nothing. If it was that easy to escape from it, he would not have been so helpless before it in the first place.

Not to mention, there was still a Scarletleaf King camping outside the formation, waiting to prey on them.

After learning of the current situation, the expressions of the crowd tensed.

They thought that they might have finally gotten out of danger, but it seemed like they were being too optimistic.

"There's no need to worry. It seems like we have reached a safe zone for the time being." Noting the low morale among the group, Zhang Xuan consoled them with a smile before turning his gaze toward the surroundings.

The courtyard they were in was larger than the previous one, and there was a door in all four directions: north, south, east, and west.

At this moment, the wall that they had crashed through to enter the courtyard had also mended itself as well. Had they not come through it previously, it would have been impossible for them to tell that there was a path beyond the wall as well.

"Where do we go now?"

In any case, they could not return the way they had come, or else they would be compromising their safety.

But of the four doors... which one should they choose?

"Principal Zhang..."

The gazes of the crowd naturally gathered upon Zhang Xuan.

Most of the dangers they had been put through had been resolved by the young man before their eyes, and unknowingly, the expedition team had begun to subconsciously look toward him for support.

"I am not too sure either..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The formation in the current area they were in had not been activated yet, so he was unable to form a corresponding book on it in the Library of Heaven's Path. As such, he was also unsure about its flaws and where he should head to.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said, "You all wait here for a moment; I will try one of them and see what's on the other side."

For the time being, he should focus his attention on activating the formation so that he could compile a book on it. Just waiting there and praying for something to happen would not work.

"Alright." The crowd nodded.

Zhang Xuan took a deep breath and randomly chose a direction to head to. Just as he was about to head over, 'jiya!', the door before him suddenly began to creak open.

Hula!

As soon as the door opened, a blade of wind abruptly burst forth, slicing the air in two.

Noticing that something was amiss, Wu shi bellowed quickly, "Everyone, duck!"

"It's just a blade of wind; there's no need to worry. I can deal with it easily..." One of the elders of the Yunxu Master Teacher Academy did not think much of it, and with a casual smile, he whipped out a massive axe and aimed it right at the wind blade.

Huala!

With incredible force, the massive axe hacked down upon the blade of wind. To the astonishment of the crowd, the massive axe was sliced apart without posing the slightest bit of hindrance to it. Before the elder could even react, his palm along with his body had already been severed into two.

"What!"

Cold sweat gushed down the bodies of the crowd.

This was especially so for Wo Tianqiong. He nearly fainted on the spot.

Others might have been unaware of it, but he knew full well that the axe wielded by the elder could easily be ranked among the top of Spirit pinnacle weapons. Such a powerful weapon, and yet, it did not even last a split second before the blade of wind.

That was too fearsome!

"The blade of wind doesn't just slice through air, it slices right through space as well," Guild Leader Han exclaimed as he hurriedly ducked down without any hesitation as well.

To the naked eye, it might have seemed like there was nothing special about the blade of wind other than being exceptionally sharp. However, Guild Leader Han had scanned the blade of wind with his Spiritual Perception, and to his shock, he found that his Spiritual Perception was not able to pass through the area where the blade of wind had cut through for a brief instant. In other words, there was a split moment when the space above and below the wind blade had been severed!

Hu!

The blade of wind flew past everyone's head, and the sharp shrill of the air in the moment that it did so left everyone's body covered in goosebumps. Zhang Xuan's body was also completely stiffened, not daring to move at all.

Even though his body had reached the level of a Saint-tier artifact, he had no doubt that he would be unable to stand his ground against such a bizarre blade of wind. All in all, it would still be wiser for him to remain cautious.

Jiya!

Right after the blade of wind flew past them, everyone heaved a sigh of relief. Just when they thought that they had finally bypassed the danger, the door behind them suddenly creaked open, and another blade of wind swept over at a diagonal angle.

"Drat!"

Just one blade of wind had nearly scared their souls out of them. How were they supposed to deal with two simultaneously?

However, it seemed like their nightmare had just barely begun. The two remaining doors also opened, and yet another two blades of wind burst forth from them at differing angles. It was keenly aimed to seal the path of escape of the crowd.

"This won't do. We might still be able to last in the short-term, but at this rate, it will only be a matter of time before we are killed," Wu shi said anxiously.

Even though they could still dodge the blades of wind by dodging, there was no knowing if each door could send out multiple blades of wind at once.

If so, they could be in a very dangerous position... perhaps even more than the area they were in previously!

"This way!"

Knowing the danger they were in, Zhang Xuan hurriedly found a flaw and took the lead while beckoning the others along.

The crowd immediately followed him.

Not too long later, they arrived at yet another courtyard.

There was a bizarre formation set up in the courtyard as well. However, it wasn't blades of wind but traps this time around. They finally escaped from it after great difficulty, but unfortunately, another master teacher ended up meeting his end there in the process of doing so.

Proceeding ahead, the crowd entered two more courtyards and suffered another two casualties before finally arriving at a relatively smaller courtyard that didn't seem to have any mechanisms to it for the time being, so they decided to take a momentary breather there. By this point, all of their faces had turned pale, and they were breathing heavily.

It had only been a few minutes since they entered the celestial palace, but four combat masters and four master teachers had already met their ends. This was a casualty greater than what they had suffered from the total of the previous few trials. The crowd could not help but fall silent at that thought.

"It seems like we are only barging from one formation into another. At this rate, we will all die here," Guild Leader Han said with a worried frown.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

There were too many smaller formations within the celestial palace, and the end was nowhere in sight either. At this rate, their numbers would only gradually thin out, and the position they were in would only further worsen.

If each formation they bypassed would result in a death toll of one or two people, considering how there were only around twenty of them left, their expedition team really could end up being annihilated here.

"What do we do?" the crowd asked worriedly.

"The strength of a formation depends on the person controlling it. Otherwise, the prowess that it can exert will be severely limited. The reason we keep encountering danger is very likely due to the Otherworldly Demon from before pulling strings from the shadows. If we can find the Otherworldly Demon and kill him, we should be able to escape from the formation relatively easier!" Guild Leader Han said.

If there was no one driving the formation, this trial would have been somewhat similar

to the Unbounded World and the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion. It would still have been dangerous, but the formations would only have been capable of carrying out routine and predictable tasks. As long as they could get the hang of it, they should have been able to bypass the formations with ease.

"Guild Leader Han is right. What we should aim for at the moment is to slay the Scarletleaf King!" Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Currently, they were in the open, and the enemy was in the dark. It was obvious that the enemy had been tracking them and activating the regional formation of where they were at any given moment to deal with them.

"Scarletleaf King?" the crowd asked with a frown.

"Un. The voice that spoke to us earlier is ranked second among the Ten Great Kings of Qingtian, and he is known as the Scarletleaf King. In terms of fighting prowess, he is above even the Stoneleaf King!" Zhang Xuan explained.

Wu shi frowned. "I have read records on the Qingtian Lineage; it is a faction of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. They have quite a few experts who are collectively known as the Ten Great Kings. Of them, there are some bestowed with the title of the Five Upper Kings due to the superior strength they wield, and they are namely the Skyleaf King, Scarletleaf King, Jadeleaf King, Stoneleaf King, and Fireleaf King."

As a master teacher of the Qingyuan Master Teacher Pavilion, he had some understanding of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe powers in the region. Every single one of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage possessed astounding power, and none of them were figures who could be dealt with easily.

Right after Wu shi said those words, the eerie voice from before sounded in the air once more.

"Not bad, it seems like you still have some self-awareness... Hehehe!"

Chapter 1059

You Are the Skyleaf King (2)

"Scarletleaf King?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

"Indeed, it's me. To be able to recognize me by my voice... You are the one who killed those two fools, Stoneleaf King and Jadeleaf King, am I right?" the voice sneered coldly.

In the next moment, Zhang Xuan felt his body tensed up. As if a poisonous viper was eyeing him, his body suddenly jolted in alarm.

It is the pressure from the other party's Primordial Spirit... Zhang Xuan thought as sweat trickled down his cheeks.

It was not even close to the other party's full strength, but it could already vanquish all thought of retaliation in his mind.

Zhang Xuan swiftly drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi, and only then did he feel the pressure alleviating significantly.

Clenching his jaws, he scanned his surroundings and spat, "Indeed. I was the one who killed them. Are you intending to avenge them?"

The Scarletleaf King was truly well-hidden. Even when using the Eye of Insight to scan the area, he found that he was not able to find the slightest clue about the other party's whereabouts.

"Avenge? Why should I? The fact that they were killed by a Nascent Saint in the first place shows that they are not qualified to serve as Kings. Worthless flies like them are better off dead!" the Scarletleaf King sneered coldly.

The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was cold-blooded by nature. The only thing that tied them together was their allegiance to the Emperors. Other than that, even if their companions were to die before their eyes, they would not be fazed in the slightest.

"Since you were able to kill them so swiftly, such that they didn't even have any time

to send a message to us, that goes to show that you are quite a figure yourself. It would be a pity to kill you so quickly." The Scarletleaf King chuckled. "Why don't we play a game instead?"

"Play a game?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

The others were also bewildered by the Scarletleaf King's sudden proposal.

"Indeed. The rule of the game is simple. Aren't you all trying to escape from this place? I have five clues here, and as long as you can obtain all of them, you will be able to escape from the formation easily and meet with my real self!" the Scarletleaf King said.

"Five clues? Hah, you won't be handing them to us on a silver platter, will you? What is the price?" Zhang Xuan sneered coldly.

"Sharp, it is so much more convenient to negotiate with smart people like you!"

The Scarletleaf King chuckled softly before saying, "The way to obtain the clues is simple. Kill one master teacher, and I will give you the first clue. Kill another two more, and I will give you the second. Kill another three more, and I will give you the third... so on and so forth. So, as long as you kill fifteen master teachers, you will be able to receive all of the clues and escape from the formation safely!"

"You want us to kill our own comrades?" Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

There were only thirty of them at the start, and eight of them were already dead, so there were only twenty-two of them remaining. If they were to kill another fifteen... their expedition team would be pretty much wiped out!

How vicious!

The expedition team was also exhausted both physically and mentally from stumbling into dangerous formations one after another. The more time that passed, the more desperate the crowd would become. Perhaps, it might really come to a point where members of the expedition would attempt to kill one another or sacrifice themselves over the matter.

The Scarletleaf King was preying on their weakened minds to turn the expedition team against one another while sitting out on the fight himself. A devious and scheming mind, it wouldn't be easy for them to outmaneuver a person like that.

"Indeed. You are a smart person, so you should know what is best for you in this situation. Even if you reject my offer, it's just a matter of time before all of you are wiped out by the formation. At the very least, if you choose to play along with me, you might still have a chance to meet me and avenge the others!" the Scarletleaf King replied leisurely.

"Despicable!" Hearing those words, the faces of the crowd reddened in anger.

Just as the other party had said, if they continued barging through the formations, it would just be a matter of time before they were killed. Only with the clues would there be a hope for them to escape from the darned formation and avenge their comrades.

"He is trying to create a rift among us! If we do so, what will be the difference between us and the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe? What rights will we have to call ourselves master teachers?" Wu shi bellowed in an attempt to calm the wavering minds.

They were truly in a very disadvantageous position at the moment. With a bleak hope of escaping from the formation themselves, they had to make a decision.

Should they persist with their principles or take the pragmatic way out?

"Right, I forgot to tell you. No matter who does the dirty job, as long as fifteen people within the expedition team die, I will give you the clues." At this point, the Scarletleaf King burst into a hearty laughter before continuing. "Make your decision quickly! I will give you two hours to decide. Hehehe! I am looking forward to your response..."

The piercing voice by their ears gradually drifted off, as if signifying that the Scarletleaf King had retracted his attention from them.

Wu shi extended his Spiritual Perception to his surroundings before turning back to the crowd and said, "He seems to have left."

"What do we do now?" Wo Tianqiong asked with a conflicted frown.

The others instinctively turned toward Zhang Xuan for directions.

It did not seem like a feasible solution for them to push their way through, but... were they going to start killing one another as the other party demanded?

"Don't listen to the Scarletleaf King's words, his very motive is to turn us against one

another. It is even more so in such situations that we have to stand united!" Zhang Xuan surveyed the crowd and spoke forcefully.

"Indeed. Think about it. Even if we survive from killing one another, it will eventually give birth to inner demons deep in our hearts, hindering us from furthering our paths. In the worst-case scenario, the other party might even use it to leverage control over us afterward," Mu shi added.

"To be honest, there isn't much of a chance that we will be able to get out of here alive!" At this point, Wo Tianqiong abruptly interjected into Mu shi's words. "As long as you successfully kill the Scarletleaf King and avenge Elder Feng and the others, we are more than willing to lay down our lives for you!"

"Indeed. From the very start, we knew that we could meet our end in the ancient domain. Since it's only a matter of time before we succumb to the formation, I'd very much rather sacrifice myself so that the rest of you can safely find a way out of here!" Wu Ran said.

"I share the same opinion with the others. Our deaths are nothing, but nothing can be allowed to happen to Principal Zhang and Wu shi. The both of them are the hopes of our expedition team. Only with them around will we have a chance to escape from here and slay the wretched Scarletleaf King!" Feng Xun nodded.

Those words swiftly won nods of approval from the crowd.

Their line of thought was simple. Fifteen casualties was not a small price to pay, but at the very least, some of them would be able to get out of there alive. That was much better than the expedition team being entirely annihilated within the formation.

"I am touched by your sentiments, but... can we really trust the Scarletleaf King to keep his word and give us the clues? Furthermore, can the clues he gives us really lead us out?" Zhang Xuan said grimly.

They were willing to selflessly put themselves on the line to forge a route for the others to advance on. But the problem was that... their sacrifice could turn out to be futile in this case!

Taking a step back, even if the Scarletleaf King really gave the clues to them, allowing them to escape from the formation, as master teachers, there were simply some principles that they would have to hold on to, even at the cost of their life. They would

not sacrifice others for their own welfare!

Otherwise, what would become of the faith they had held onto dearly as master teachers all this while?

"What do we do then?"

The crowd also understood the logic behind Zhang Xuan's words, but... after seeing so many of their comrades dying one after another, they simply could not stand it anymore. It was out of desperation that they chose such an extreme course of action.

Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly. "I have no idea..."

At this point, he had no idea how the formation operated or where the Scarletleaf King was. Without such vital information, there was no way he could formulate a feasible plan to help them get out of their current situation.

"You don't know?" Seeing that even Zhang Xuan was helpless before their current situation, the faces of the crowd sank as if deflated balloons.

In their journey together, Zhang Xuan had overcome obstacle after obstacle easily, and it felt as if there was nothing in the world that could stump him. At this point, seeing how even the most capable individual among them was helpless, they suddenly felt deeply lost.

"I can't stand it anymore! Didn't the Scarletleaf King say that it will suffice as long as fifteen of us die? Just make sure to avenge me when the rest of you escape from here!"

After a long moment of silence, a loud bellow abruptly sounded. Unable to take it any longer, a combat master raised his sword to end his life.

"Hold it right there!" Not expecting that someone would still attempt to commit suicide after he had already laid everything out so clearly, Zhang Xuan frowned deeply as he flicked his finger.

Ding!

A surge of zhenqi knocked out the sword in the combat master's hand. Wu shi also swiftly stepped forward to seal the other party's cultivation.

The problem they were facing at the moment was not an issue that could be resolved with just the sacrifice of others. They could not just stake their lives on the integrity of the Scarletleaf King, if he had any at all. That would be utter foolishness!

They had to think of another plan.

"Don't stop me! Let me die..." the combat master continued bellowing loudly.

The sealing of his cultivation did not seem to have dispelled the combat master's intention of ending his life at all.

"Since you aren't going to allow us to end our lives, allow me to do the job then..."

Almost immediately after they managed to settle the issue with the combat master, another roar sounded, and a master teacher stepped forward to launch an attack toward the combat master beside him.

"Humph!" Seeing the act of aggression by the master teacher, Feng Xun flitted forward and kicked the master teacher away forcefully.

Peng!

With a spurt of blood, the master teacher crashed heavily onto the ground, sustaining severe injuries.

"Feng Xun, what are you doing?" Shen Pingchao hurriedly rushed down to help the wounded master teacher up before glaring at Feng Xun wrathfully.

The wounded master teacher was an elder of their Luoqing Master Teacher Academy.

"What am I doing? For daring to assault our men, you should be glad that I didn't kill him on the spot!" Feng Xun roared angrily back.

Their combat masters had been standing on the spot, doing nothing at all, when the master teacher suddenly stepped forward to assault them. Had he not made a move, their combat master could have very well died! Yet, the other party was still asking what was he doing? He must be joking!

"I reckon that you are just finding an excuse to make a move against us. Since that's the case, why don't you start with me?" Shen Pingchao harrumphed coldly.

"You'd better not piss me off. Throughout this entire journey, your men have been nothing but a huge burden, and I have been wanting to give you a piece of my mind..." Feng Xun sneered coldly.

Not expecting the expedition team to end up arguing with one another while in such danger, Wu shi roared angrily, "Enough!"

"We are all master teachers and combat masters! While we have come to this ancient domain with the conviction to lay down our lives for our mission, it would be utterly foolish to turn against one another under the provocations of an Otherworldly Demon. If that happens, how are we going to face our predecessors? How are we going to face Kong shi?"

"Humph!" Hearing Wu shi's lecture, Feng Xun and Shen Pingchao glanced at one another before turning away angrily. For the time being, they chose to suppress their rage.

"Alright, take a deep breath and cool down first. For the time being, let's discuss how we can escape from here," Guild Leader Han said.

"How can we escape from here? This formation has a complex layered design with traps lying in wait at every turn. Furthermore, even if we manage to escape from the formation, will we be a match for the Scarletleaf King?" Feng Xun said with a deep frown.

"I fought with the Stoneleaf King myself, and even if Wu shi utilizes his full strength, he will only be an equal to the Stoneleaf King... Considering the greater strength that the Scarletleaf King harnesses, I don't think that we stand a good chance of getting out of here alive."

"I still think that we should sacrifice fifteen among us to obtain the other party's clues. As long as we preserve the strongest of our forces, we should still be able to match the Scarletleaf King. Otherwise, who knows how many of us will die within this formation?" the other Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, Jiang Yuan, said.

"But if we do so, we will be playing right into the Scarletleaf King's hands..." Wu shi frowned.

"Playing right into the Scarletleaf King's hands? You might be right, but do we have

another choice? To tell you the truth, I am very certain that there is a spy among us. Otherwise, how could the Otherworldly Demons have such a tight grasp of our movements? How could they remain constantly ahead of us? Don't you think that it's too much to consider it a coincidence?" Jiang Yuan said.

"Spy? How is that possible? We are all master teachers, so how could there possibly be any traitors among us?" Wu shi shook his head.

"You Xu was also a master teacher himself, but didn't he betray mankind eventually?" Jiang Yuan pointed it out coldly.

"This..." A conflicted expression surfaced on Wu shi's face. Frowning, he turned to Jiang Yuan and asked, "Jiang shi, for you to speak such words, could it be that you have noticed something?"

"I did notice a few things that are amiss with the situation..." Jiang Yuan harrumphed coldly before turning to Luo Ruoxin with a sharp glint in his eyes. "Luo shi, there are a few questions that I would like to ask you."

Luo Ruoxin frowned. "Go ahead."

"When we first entered the ancient domain, even Wu shi and Guild Leader Han did not notice that it was a Spatial Formation, but somehow, you were able to tell with just a glance.

"In the Unbounded World, all of us were bewitched by the demonic tune and suffered significant depletion in our stamina and zhenqi, but somehow, you were the only one who remained relatively unharmed. Not only so, shortly after you left, our expedition team immediately came under the assault of the Otherworldly Demons.

"For the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion, none of us were aware that soul-type artifacts have the ability to fend off the corrosion, but somehow, you knew full well about it. In fact, thinking back, you were the one who told us to follow the footsteps of the Otherworldly Demons... but look at this. We ended up walking right into their trap!"

Jiang Yuan sneered coldly. "How do you intend to explain this?"

"Now that he has pointed that out, it does indeed seem a little fishy..."

"Indeed, isn't everything that has happened a little too coincidental? There is

something wrong with this Luo shi!"

"At the very start, I thought that it was weird that Luo shi would request to join the expedition at the very last minute. Now that I look at it, there is indeed something deeper to it..."

"Let's see how she responds to that..."

Huala!

Right after hearing Jiang Yuan's analysis, the faces of the crowd immediately darkened. They quickly stepped away from Luo Ruoxin, isolating her.

"You think that I am a spy?" Not expecting the other party to suddenly point his finger at her, Luo Ruoxin frowned in displeasure.

"Indeed. Disguising yourself as one of our own, you slowly led us into trap after trap. We sure were fools for listening blindly to your words. Of the Qingtian Lineage, there is only one who possesses such wits and capability. If I'm not mistaken..."

Jiang Yuan glared at Luo Ruoxin sharply as he said, "You are the Skyleaf King!"

Chapter 1060

Jiang Yuan

"Skyleaf King? Shouldn't the Skyleaf King be a male?"

"Indeed! From what I know, the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage are all men..."

Since the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage were all men, how could the Skyleaf King be a female?

"Who says that the Skyleaf King can't be a woman?" Jiang Yuan interjected. "The Skyleaf King has always been an enigma to the Master Teacher Pavilion. All we know is that she exists, but none of us have met her before. So, how can you be certain that the Skyleaf King is not a woman? Besides, even if the Skyleaf King is a man, given that he has already reached the Leaving Aperture realm, it should be easy for someone of his prowess to possess the body of a human and mix in among us!"

"This..."

Hearing those words, the crowd clenched their fists tightly as they directed wary gazes toward Luo Ruoxin.

Indeed, a cultivator who had reached the Leaving Aperture realm was capable of drawing their Primordial Spirit out of their body. On top of harnessing immense strength and the freedom of movement, they were capable of possessing the bodies of others as well! Furthermore, unlike soul oracles, they wouldn't suffer from the Possession Decline either. At most, their Primordial Spirit would just be incompatible with the body they were in, causing them to be unable to draw out their full strength!

It could be said that... if the Skyleaf King had truly possessed Luo Ruoxin, no one would be any the wiser, and this was including even Wu shi!

Recalling Luo Ruoxin's actions, while she had not spoken much after entering the ancient domain, every word that she had spoken was of the utmost importance to the progression of their journey. No matter how knowledgeable a twenty-year-old woman was, could she still be more well-read than Wu shi and Guild Leader Han?

Could she have really been possessed by the Skyleaf King, intentionally using her words to lead the crowd from one trap into another along the journey?

Wu shi was just about to say something when he suddenly paused for a brief moment. Frowning deeply, he turned to the young lady and said, "This... It would be best for you to explain this matter!"

To be honest, Jiang Yuan's analysis did make sense. There were indeed several doubtful aspects about the young lady before them.

While Luo Ruoxin did have a close relationship with Mu shi, whose recommendation had allowed her to join the expedition team, up to this point, Wu shi still had no idea how powerful she was. Even with eye of discernment of his level, he was unable to see through the young lady.

Despite being doubted by everyone else, Luo Ruoxin did not bother to explain herself. Instead, she shook her head before asking, "Is that what all of you think?"

"Y-you... You can't really be an Otherworldly Demon in disguise, can you?" Feng Xun's face paled as he backed away fearfully.

Had he actually fallen in love with an Otherworldly Demon, and one who could very well be a man? Just the thought of it left his hair standing on ends, and he felt like puking!

Seeing Feng Xun's response, Luo Ruoxin could not help but shake her head with a wry smile. That fellow claimed that he liked her, but in crucial times such as this, he didn't have the slightest trust in her.

Sighing deeply, Luo Ruoxin was just about to speak when a towering back suddenly appeared before her.

"Enough!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand. Turning around to shoot a glance at the young lady before him, he said, "I believe that she isn't an Otherworldly Demon, and she isn't being possessed by anyone either!"

Luo Ruoxin looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, "You trust me?"

"I do." Zhang Xuan said with a smile. There was earnestness in his eyes that could not possibly be faked. "Don't worry. No matter what others say, I will always stand by you!"

Of the entire expedition team, he was the one who had come the closest with this young lady. Along the way, the latter had been walking alongside them quietly, rarely allowing anything to bother her. If she was truly the Skyleaf King, considering the strength that she possessed, the expedition team would have been wiped out long ago. There was no need for her to go the extra mile to disguise herself.

Seeing that the other party's eyes were clear, devoid of the slightest hint of doubt, Luo Ruoxin could not help but feel a warmth in her heart. "What he said is true. The Otherworldly Demons attacked right after I left, and I was also the one who recommended following the Otherworldly Demons' trail before we stepped into this trap. There's no way I can refute those claims, so why do you still believe me?"

"Must there be a reason for trust?" Staring deeply into Luo Ruoxin's eyes, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "I will trust you no matter what you do. Don't worry, you don't have to say a word. I will resolve this matter for you!"

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan turned around and said, "I am willing to use my life to guarantee that Luo Shi isn't the Skyleaf King or an Otherworldly Demon!"

"Use your life to guarantee? Principal Zhang... you have to reconsider it! What Combat Master Jiang isn't without sense..." Wu Shi hurriedly tried to persuade him.

"Indeed, Principal Zhang. There's something amiss about Luo Shi..."

The others also chirped in anxiously.

Principal Zhang was a person whom they deeply trusted and admired. Why would such a formidable master teacher end up falling before the skirt of a lady?

Seeing Zhang Xuan stepping forward to protect Luo Ruoxin, Jiang Yuan said with a deep frown, "It is due to Principal Zhang that we are still alive right now and have managed to come so far. If Principal Zhang truly intends to protect her, there is nothing I can say. However... if she truly is the Skyleaf King, not only will all of us die here, more importantly, our mission to find Zhang Yinqiu and the others will fail as well. The reputation of the Master Teacher Pavilion could very well be sullied due to this matter!"

Zhang Xuan flung his sleeves and harrumphed coldly. "I know what I am doing. I don't need you to teach me what to do!"

"You..." Not expecting the amiable Principal Zhang to suddenly disregard him altogether, Jiang Yuan clenched his fists tightly.

"Stop with your pathetic efforts to sway others; there's definitely nothing wrong with Luo shi. Instead, the one who has something wrong is you, Combat Master Jiang!" Zhang Xuan gazed upon Jiang Yuan coldly.

"There's something wrong with me? What could there possibly be wrong with me?" Jiang Yuan shook his head.

Throughout the entire journey, he had not spoken a word at all, and he had not given the wrong direction either. How could he be a spy for the Otherworldly Demons?

At the same time, the crowd were also perplexed to hear Zhang Xuan's abrupt accusation.

Instead of replying to Jiang Yuan's words, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and said, "We have passed through many courtyards so far, and every single one of them has a formation that triggers as soon as we enter. I believe every single one of us here should have a deep impression of this matter."

"Un." The crowd nodded.

They had met many perilous situations ever since entering the celestial palace. Each time, they would barely escape with their lives. Even when their companions died right before their eyes, they did not even have the time to collect their corpses so as to give them a proper burial later on.

"Every single courtyard that we enter poses a threat of its own... but did you notice that despite having entered this courtyard for some time, nothing has happened at all? Other than the words that the Scarletleaf King said before leaving, it doesn't seem like anything has happened at all, right?"

Zhang Xuan looked at the crowd and said, "Don't you think that it's bizarre?"

"This..." The crowd fell silent.

Just as the other party said, the courtyards that they had been through thus far had been extremely dangerous, and the slightest carelessness could have resulted in their deaths. However, they had already been in the current courtyard for more than twenty

minutes, but nothing had happened at all. Initially, they thought that it might just have been a safe zone, but thinking deeper into the matter at this moment... was it really possible for there to be a safe zone in this massive formation?

"Isn't it just because the Scarletleaf King didn't activate the formation? He has probably just changed his plans and is trying to have us kill one another instead..." one of the combat masters said.

"You're right in saying that he is trying to have us kill one another, but... I can tell you that the formation in this courtyard has already been activated!" Zhang Xuan said.

Guild Leader Han was taken aback by those words. "You are saying that... we are currently standing amid an activated formation at this very moment?"

As the head of the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild, a 7-star pinnacle formation master, if a formation had truly been activated where they were standing, he should have noticed it!

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded grimly. "There is a formation in this courtyard, and it has already been active for some time. In fact, we are currently under its effects!"

"This..." Everyone glanced at one another with bewildered expressions.

They might not have been as skilled as Guild Leader Han in the field of formations, but as master teachers and combat masters, they should still have been able to discern whether they were in a formation or not. Their surroundings were completely silent, and there was not the slightest disturbance in the spiritual energy to be felt. Given so, how could they possibly be standing amid an activated formation?

At this point, Zhang Xuan turned to Shen Pingchao and asked, "Principal Zhang, may I ask how Elder Gan usually conducts himself in the Luoqing Master Teacher Academy?"

The person whom Zhang Xuan addressed as Elder Gan was the master teacher who had charged forward previously to kill the combat masters.

"Elder Gan is a true master teacher through and through. Due to his amiable and patient personality, he is well-received by the students..." Shen Pingchao wasn't sure why Zhang Xuan would ask such a question, but he still answered it earnestly after pondering over it for a moment.

Normally speaking, Elder Gan could not even bring himself to reprimand students who had erred, thus earning him a good reputation within the Master Teacher Academy. It was also in view of this that Shen Pingchao was extremely protective of him... As such, he was willing to stand up against even Feng Xun for Elder Gan's sake.

Seemingly knowing that Shen Pingchao would respond in such a manner, Zhang Xuan asked calmly, "An amiable and patient teacher suddenly raised his sword to kill another... Don't you think that it's a very bizarre situation in itself?"

"This..."

The crowd was stunned by the questioning.

Guild Leader Han suddenly thought of something, and he immediately asked with a grim look, "Could it be that... there is some kind of special formation in this courtyard that interferes with our thoughts and emotions, causing us to become more hot-tempered than usual?"

"Indeed. That is precisely why the Scarletleaf King chose to appear right at this moment, saying those words so as to plant a seed in our minds. After which, he secretly activated the formation to affect our emotions... Have you all realized that, within just a short twenty minutes, we have become more violent-tempered and irrational than before?" Zhang Xuan posed.

The crowd was rendered speechless.

That was indeed the case.

Previously, when they were in the other courtyards, they would still proceed as carefully as they could so as to reduce their casualties. Yet, after entering the current courtyard, they realized that the thought that had been dominating their minds was how they could kill others or commit suicide so as to make up for the required fifteen slots!

Thinking back, their thoughts had truly been irrational. It was due to such thoughts that resulted in the conflict among them.

After hearing those words, Feng Xun and Shen Pingchao glanced at one another as cold sweat drenched their backs.

Had Wu shi not stopped them previously, they might have ended up doing something unforgivable to the other party!

"Everyone ended up succumbing to it, and not even Combat Master Feng Xun was an exception..." At this point, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward Jiang Yuan. "I am just curious to know how the great Combat Master Jiang managed to avoid the effects of the formation and even rationally argue that there is a problem with Luo shi and that she is the Skyleaf King?"

"Indeed! Could it be that you aren't affected by the formation?"

Innumerable gazes immediately turned toward Jiang Yuan.

"I..." Jiang Yuan eyebrows shot up inconspicuously for a short moment before sneering coldly. Shaking his head, he said, "Principal Zhang, please don't change the topic at hand. I might be unaffected by the effects of the formation, but the same goes for you and Luo shi, isn't that so? Each of us have differing experiences and encounters in life, and thus, our personality and mental fortitude are different. You can't cast doubt on me just because I am different from the others, right?"

"You are right. Just the fact that you are unaffected by the formation isn't enough evidence to suspect you..."

At this point, Zhang Xuan looked at Jiang Yuan with an enigmatic smile. "But both you and Feng Xun are Thousand Men Commanders of the Combat Master Hall. The both of you are equal in terms of standing, but throughout the entire journey, you have hardly spoken a word. It is as if you do not exist at all. Even when your subordinates were attacked, you acted as if it had nothing to do with you at all. Don't you think that you are being a little too... impassive?"

Chapter 1061

The Skyleaf King Appears

"This..."

"Indeed, how can he still remain calm before such a situation?"

Zhang Xuan's words raised many doubts in the minds of others.

Despite being a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, Jiang Yuan had been extremely silent throughout the entire journey, standing impassively by the side even when the other combat masters met with danger. Had it not been for him standing up a moment ago, the crowd might have forgotten about his existence.

Jiang Yuan's face turned livid for a moment before he waved his hands nonchalantly. "The requirement of being a combat master is to remain composed even when the sky falls. Furthermore, given how dangerous the situation is and my lack of understanding of formations, I feel that it's not my place to speak up, or else I might cause others more trouble. You can't be suspecting me of being a spy just because I have been silent all this while, can you?"

"There are many people who have remained quiet all this while just like you, such as Formation Master Liu Mo. You are right in saying that being silent isn't enough evidence to doubt you."

"Then..." Jiang Yuan frowned doubtfully, unsure of what Zhang Xuan was getting at.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan's lips curled up. "Don't worry, I just want to ask you a very simple question. Can you list the names of the combat masters who have sacrificed themselves here?"

"I..." Jiang Yuan was stunned.

Other than Jiang Yuan, Feng Xun, and Zhuo Qingfeng, there were another twelve combat masters in the expedition team. All in all, there were only fifteen of them.

Due to the strict discipline that the Combat Master Hall expected of its members, the four of them hadn't really spoken much throughout the entire duration. There was also no one who actively tried to speak with them, so not even Zhang Xuan was aware of their names. But as a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall, the direct superior of those combat masters, Jiang Yuan should have been well aware of their names!

"What? You can't even name your own subordinates?" Zhang Xuan mocked coldly.

"Combat Master Jiang, what's wrong?" Feng Xun was taken aback.

Coming from the same Combat Master Hall, he knew that two of the deceased combat masters had been trained by Jiang Yuan personally. Yet, to be unable to name even those two... that was truly extremely suspicious.

The others hurriedly stepped back as they turned doubtful looks toward Jiang Yuan.

The situation concerning Luo Ruoxin could still be passed off as coincidence, but for Jiang Yuan to be unable to name his own subordinates... that could not be explained!

Jiang Yuan opened his mouth several times, but not a word came out of his mouth. The composure of his face gradually eroded before eventually forming a sneer. "You are indeed very smart... Very well, since you have noticed me... I guess this is the end of our game!"

Boom!

Shortly after those words were spoken, a powerful aura burst forth from Jiang Yuan. It exerted an incredible pressure on those around him, leaving them feeling suffocated within.

"He is at the Leaving Aperture realm..." Wu shi's narrowed in astonishment.

He hurriedly stepped in front of the crowd while driving his zhenqi to its maximum might, ready to make a move at any moment.

Just by the aura exuded by the other party, he could tell that the other party was a true Leaving Aperture realm expert, an existence that was far stronger than him.

"Do you think that you will be able to stop me?" 'Jiang Yuan' sneered coldly as he raised

his finger and tapped the space in front of him lightly.

Peng!

Before Wu shi could react, he was sent flying before crashing heavily into a wall.

Leaving Aperture realm primary stage and Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle, it was just a gap of two cultivation stages, but the difference between the two was like the gap between heaven and earth.

"Everyone, be careful! He is the Skyleaf King!" Wu shi roared anxiously.

Even though the other party had only used his Primordial Spirit in the attack, Wu shi could still feel overwhelming killing intent from it. Of the Qingtian Lineage, the only one who could possess such immense strength was the legendary Skyleaf King!

"Skyleaf King?"

The bodies of the crowd immediately tensed up. They hurriedly raised their weapons as they eyed the person before them warily.

They knew that they would not be a match for the other party, but they had no other choice at the moment. It was impossible for them to escape from a true Leaving Aperture realm expert, so the only choice they had was to face the other party.

"Hah, a bunch of weaklings!" Facing the attack of the crowd, Jiang Yuan stepped forward calmly before abruptly thrusting his palm forward.

Boom!

A great pressure fell upon everyone in an instant, leaving them feeling as if the world was crumbling around them.

Upon reaching the Leaving Aperture realm, one's Primordial Spirit gained the ability to move even the power of nature itself. The members of the expedition team were by no means weak, but they were still far from matching up to such strength.

"Humph!"

After holding everyone in place, 'Jiang Yuan' flicked his finger forcefully.

Sou sou sou sou!

The weapons in everyone hands immediately flew out of their grasps with such great force that their fingers began bleeding.

"I will block him. The rest of you, run!"

Realizing that they would not be a match for the other party even with their strength combined, Wu shi roared furiously as he flew toward the latter.

Saint-tier battle technique, Overlapping Waves Furious Gale Slash!

Slashing his sword furiously, Wu shi sent burst after burst of sword qi toward the other party, reminiscent of the relentless waves of the ocean. Even the surrounding air seemed to have been ripped apart by the motion, creating a huge gorge on the ground.

"Interesting..."Jiang Yuan' chuckled softly as he raised his hands. As if playing cat's cradle, he struck the sword qi with his little finger, followed by his ring finger, middle finger, forefinger, and his thumb. Every single strike would dissipate the sword qi slightly, and after a few strikes, the furious might of the Overlapping Waves Furious Gale Slash had already been neutralized entirely.

"That is the Saint-tier battle technique Wind Treading Fingers! Isn't he the Skyleaf King? How is he able to utilize the techniques of the Combat Master Hall?" Feng Xun uttered in disbelief.

The technique the other party was utilizing was actually a move of the Combat Master Hall, Wind Treading Fingers!

"The Skyleaf King hasn't really claimed Combat Master Jiang's body for his own. Instead, he is only controlling the latter's soul. In other words, Combat Master Jiang is still alive," Zhang Xuan said with a frown.

"Combat Master Jiang is still alive? Principal Zhang, I beseech you, please save him!" Feng Xun pleaded anxiously.

Jiang Yuan was a very close friend of his, and they had braved through many battles together. In the journey through the ancient domain, he had been so concerned with the happenings around him that he did not even notice that his close friend had been possessed by the Skyleaf King. No matter what, he was determined to save him!

"Un, we definitely have to save Combat Master Jiang, but there are two things that I am still unable to make sense of for the moment," Zhang Xuan said as he stroked his lower jaw.

With his current strength, he would not be able to interfere in the fight between Wu shi and the Skyleaf King. Thus, he decided to focus his attention on analyzing the situation first.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was still contemplating in such an urgent situation, Feng Xun urged anxiously, "There's no time to think anymore! I fear that Wu shi will break Combat Master Jiang's physical body at this rate. If so, we won't be able to save him even if we do manage to force the Skyleaf King out of his body!"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the battle.

By that point, Guild Leader Han and Mu shi had joined the battle as well.

The Skyleaf King was powerful, and Wu shi alone was not a match for him. However... with the three of them collaborating with one another, they were gradually gaining the upper hand.

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. I didn't think that the three of them will be able to pull off such a powerful formation together...

Individually, Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and Mu shi were far from a match for the powerful Skyleaf King. However, when their powers were combined through an offensive formation, they were actually able to exert a fighting prowess far beyond their individual limits, allowing them to gain the upper hand even against an opponent as powerful as the Skyleaf King.

No, something is amiss. Even if the Skyleaf King's strength is diminished due to incompatibility with Combat Master Jiang's body, it does not make sense for him to have weakened so much.

When a Leaving Aperture realm expert possessed the body of another, their strength would be reduced. Even so... the strength that they wielded would still be far beyond what Wu shi and the others could withstand. Yet, the Skyleaf King was gradually being forced back. The situation did not add up.

"You are courting death..." After retreating for a few steps, 'Jiang Yuan' suddenly came

to a halt. With reddened eyes, he roared furiously as a Primordial Spirit escaped from his glabella.

Hong long long!

As soon as the Primordial Spirit appeared, the surrounding spiritual energy began gathering together to form a giant that carried destructive might and aura at a wave of its hands.

Hu!

With a simple palm strike, the formation formed by Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and Mu shi was unraveled. A few more strikes later, the trio was unable to withstand the incredible might of the Skyleaf King and sustained significant damage, spewing blood from their mouths.

"Hold it right there!"

Noting that the trio was in a dire position, Feng Xun quickly rushed forward to their aid.

"Heh!" The Skyleaf King sneered coldly as he raised his finger to flick Feng Xun.

Peng!

A single strike, and Feng Xun was sent flying as well.

Despite being a Saint 3-dan pinnacle combat master, he was still a long way from matching up to the Saint 5-dan Skyleaf King.

"I got it!" Watching as Feng Xun was knocked flying, a thought suddenly came to Zhang Xuan's mind as his eyes lit up in excitement. Slapping his thigh excitedly, he turned around and instructed, "Everyone, I need some time. I will have to ask you to hold him back for a short moment..."

Hearing those words, the crowd nodded before gathering zhenqi on their palms and directing it toward the Primordial Spirit in the sky.

They knew that they would not be a match for the Skyleaf King, but they trusted Zhang Xuan deeply. They knew that the latter had his reasons for issuing such commands, so

they immediately acted on it.

While the others were holding back the Skyleaf King, Zhang Xuan rushed up to Jiang Yuan's body and punched him in his face.

Peng!

As the Skyleaf King had departed from Jiang Yuan's body, and Jiang Yuan's soul had not regained control of his body yet, the body was completely vulnerable at the moment. Unable to withstand Zhang Xuan's attack, it was immediately sent flying into the distance.

"Principal Zhang!"

Feng Xun, who had just barely gotten back up to his feet, saw the sight, and he nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

It was just a moment ago that you said that Jiang Yuan was still alive, but a moment later, you suddenly began pummeling Jiang Yuan viciously. Do you have some kind of deep-seated hatred toward him that you are so anxious to send him off to his death?

Peng peng peng peng!

Paying no heed to Feng Xun's shout, Zhang Xuan walked up to Jiang Yuan and struck the back of his head forcefully once more.

Feng Xun was about to rush up to stop Zhang Xuan when the sight before him abruptly left him with a feeling of *déjà vu*, and he froze on the spot. That movement... why does it feel so familiar?

Certain memories seemed to flicker across the back of his mind, and he felt as if... he had encountered such a scene before. Furthermore, a dull pain was starting to creep to the back of his head as well...

However, that sensation vanished in an instant, and he did not have the time to devote any thoughts to it either. He continued rushing toward Zhang Xuan to stop the latter, but in a casual glance upwards, he saw the Primordial Spirit of the Skyleaf King shaking unstably as horror surfaced in his eyes.

"What are you doing?" the Skyleaf King roared furiously as he raised a hand toward

Zhang Xuan to grasp him.

However, before the hand could reach, Zhang Xuan had already sent another punch into Jiang Yuan's body.

The Primordial Spirit jolted once more, and it nearly fell from the sky this time around.

Upon seeing this sight, Feng Xun and Wu shi glanced at one another as a look of delight bloomed on their faces. "Could it be that... attacking Combat Master Jiang's body will affect the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit as well?"

"Principal Zhang, allow me!" Feng Xun rushed right up toward Jiang Yuan and sent a punch toward where Zhang Xuan had struck earlier.

Huala!

Just as they had anticipated, the Primordial Spirit in the sky jolted yet again, as if having sustained severe damage.

"Help me control that fellow. There are some questions that I need to ask him..." Passing Jiang Yuan into Feng Xun's arms, he flew to Wu shi's side and looked up toward the Primordial Spirit in the sky.

"Principal Zhang, what is going on?" Wu shi and the others asked doubtfully.

Both he and Guild Leader Han were nearing Leaving Aperture realm, but they had never heard that a Primordial Spirit would be affected by attacks directed toward its body... not to mention, a possessed body at that!

"I will explain the situation to you later on." Zhang Xuan waved his hand before turning his attention back toward the Skyleaf King.

"Skyleaf King, there are some things that I just can't understand no matter how I ponder over them. Why are you going to the extent of paying such a heavy price just to conceal yourself within Combat Master Jiang's body?"

Chapter 1062

Him!

The Skyleaf King harrumphed. "A clever man you are indeed. Within such a short period of time, you managed to clearly identify my weakness."

Halfway through his words, however, Feng Xun suddenly struck the back of Jiang Yuan's head out of excitement, and the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit jolted violently, nearly collapsing back to the ground.

"There is no way I could have missed it. Under normal circumstances, it should be impossible for you to execute the battle techniques of the original host, but you still managed to pull it off. That means that you have only exerted dominance over Combat Master Jiang's soul temporarily instead of wiping it out entirely. From this, it can be deduced that your strength is currently severely limited," said Zhang Xuan.

"I see. How could I have missed that?" Guild Leader Han's eyes lit up as a thought came to his mind.

"What's happening?" Wu shi asked in bewilderment.

"This involves a huge secret regarding how Leaving Aperture realm cultivators possess others. Under normal circumstances, the possessor should only be able to utilize battle techniques that they are skilled at, but previously, Combat Master Jiang managed to execute the Wind Treading Fingers. This goes to show that his soul is still around, just that it has only been suppressed for the time being.

"As powerful as a Leaving Aperture realm cultivator's Primordial Spirit is, it is still extremely dangerous for him to attempt to control another soul in its own body. In its home ground, the opposing soul has a significant advantage against the Primordial Spirit. Even if it is unable to defeat the Primordial Spirit, it will still be able to keep it occupied, resulting in a significant decline in the latter's fighting prowess!" Guild Leader Han explained.

As his real cultivation was slightly higher than Wu shi's, he also had a greater understanding of the Leaving Aperture realm than the latter.

"Then... why would the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit be injured while attacking Combat Master Jiang's body?" Wo Tianqiong asked with a frown.

The others also turned perplexed gazes toward Guild Leader Han.

Since the Skyleaf King was only possessing Jiang Yuan's body, there should have been no connection between the two. Not to mention, even if it was the Skyleaf King's own body there, such a sight still should not have occurred. After the Primordial Spirit left the body, the body should have been nothing more than a corpse, so killing it would not have affected the Primordial Spirit in any way.

This was just like how even though Zhang Xuan had melted the Jadeleaf King's body down, the Jadeleaf King's Primordial Spirit had remained unfazed by the matter, not injured or weakened in any manner.

"This..." Guild Leader Han frowned deeply in contemplation before eventually shaking his head. "I am not too sure about the matter either."

Honestly, when he saw the Skyleaf King jolting as Jiang Yuan's body was being struck, he was baffled as well.

"It's simple!" Hearing their conversation, Zhang Xuan smiled. "The Skyleaf King definitely wields sufficient strength to kill Jiang Yuan's soul before possessing him, but he didn't choose to do so because it would have made it difficult for him to conceal the malicious aura of his Primordial Spirit and emulate Jiang Yuan's aura. Otherworldly Demon Kings harness powerful killing intent in their bodies and souls, so if the Skyleaf King had truly possessed Combat Master Jiang, we would have noticed it swiftly."

The crowd nodded.

The Zhenqi of Slaughter that the Otherworldly Demons cultivated granted even their souls deep killing intent, thus making their presence very noticeable.

"In order to avoid our notice, the Skyleaf King was unable to utilize any normal possession means. Thus, the only option he was left with was the 'Coexistence of Souls'. This secret art would allow his Primordial Spirit to take control of Combat Master Jiang's body while emanating only the latter's aura, making it difficult for others to notice his presence. However, the problem with that was that if Combat Master Jiang's soul were to be struck, he would suffer damage as well."

Chuckling softly, Zhang Xuan raised his gaze to the figure in the sky and asked, "Am I right?"

"Not bad, but do you think that you can subdue me with just this? You are too naïve."

The Skyleaf King was about to continue speaking when he suddenly felt a splitting pain, and his body jolted yet again, stifling his words.

Lowering his gaze, he saw Feng Xun striking the back of Jiang Yuan's head relentlessly, as if trying to vent his frustration.

"You..." The Skyleaf King felt so furious that he was on the verge of erupting.

At that moment, Zhang Xuan spoke once more. "There's just one last problem that I have been unable to make sense of. Just what is in our expedition team that would lead even the great Skyleaf King to willingly sever his Primordial Spirit and suffer a sharp decline in his cultivation just to infiltrate our group?"

"Sever his Primordial Spirit?"

Everyone was stunned.

"This Primordial Spirit isn't the Skyleaf King himself but a portion that he severed. Otherwise, how could the number one King of the Qingtian Lineage only wield such strength?" Zhang Xuan said.

He had seen the Half-Leaving Aperture realm Jadeleaf King drawing his Primordial Spirit out to battle against the Stoneleaf King, and the strength that he had wielded was truly spectacular. There were very few who would have been able to stand in his way.

Considering that the Skyleaf King was a full-fledged Leaving Aperture realm expert, how could he only wield that little strength?

Furthermore, there was no way a person as cautious as the Skyleaf King would fuse his entire Primordial Spirit with Jiang Yuan.

If he were to do so, wouldn't that be equivalent to entrusting his life to Jiang Yuan?

Thus, from these two points, he could deduce that the Primordial Spirit within Jiang

Yuan's body was not the Skyleaf King himself but just a portion that he had severed.

"Just a severed portion of his Primordial Spirit already wields so much strength?"

The crowd was horrified.

With just this small portion of his Primordial Spirit, he had managed to grasp control of Jiang Yuan and nearly decimate their entire expedition team. Wasn't the Skyleaf King a little too frightening?

Seeing how the young man below was able to even guess this, the Skyleaf King was slightly surprised. A moment later, he sneered coldly and said, "You are indeed a smart person. Since that's the case, I shan't beat around the bush either. Hand the item over, and I will spare your lives..."

He was just about to add a few more threats when his Primordial Spirit jolted yet again and plummeted eight meters from the sky. He turned his gaze toward Feng Xun, who was still busy hammering Jiang Yuan, and roared with clenched jaws, "What the heck are you doing? Stop it!"

"Ah?" Hearing the loud bellow, Feng Xun was stunned for a moment. However, after realizing that the one speaking was the Skyleaf King, he went to turn back around to continue when he saw Zhang Xuan shaking his head at him.

"Alright, you can stop for the time being. There are a few questions that I need to ask him."

"Alright!" Feng Xun nodded as he gazed at Jiang Yuan's body reluctantly.

With Feng Xun finally halting his disruptive behavior, the Skyleaf King heaved a sigh of relief. Turning his gaze back to Zhang Xuan, he said, "Alright, let's cut the crap. Hand over the map in your possession!"

"Map?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. "Didn't you snatch it from the Poison Hall?"

The Skyleaf King clearly had the strength to kill all of them, so the fact that he was willing to sever his Primordial Spirit just to infiltrate their ranks was bewildering in itself. At this moment, hearing him suddenly speak about a map, Zhang Xuan could not help but feel even more perplexed.

He had indeed heard that there was a map on the ancient domain, but wasn't it snatched away by the Skyleaf King back at the Poison Hall?

After going through all the effort to infiltrate the Poison Hall, he had ended up obtaining nothing at all. That had left him feeling quite disappointed for some time.

"The portion that I have obtained only consists of the introduction of the ancient domain, and it's written in the language of the ancient gods at that. There is no way that I can read that." The Skyleaf King harrumphed coldly. "Without a doubt, the real map was taken away by Wu Yangzi two thousand years ago. It must be in one of your hands!"

"It was taken away by Wu Yangzi?" Zhang Xuan was stunned for a brief moment before a thought abruptly came into his mind. Lifting his gaze to face the Skyleaf King once more, he said, "Elder Wu Yangzi was kidnapped by your Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, imprisoned till the day of his death. If he really had the map in his possession, it would have long fallen into your hands. Feng Xun, since that fellow is playing games with us, pummel him to his death!"

"Sure thing!" Feng Xun excitedly nodded before sending fist after fist into Jiang Yuan's body once more.

Pilipala!

Under the barrage of fists, the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit jolted ceaselessly. Overwhelmed with rage, the Skyleaf King narrowed his eyes furiously and roared, "I will remember this! Zhang Xuan, is it? You'd better pray that you don't meet me in the future, or else I will tear you to pieces!"

After saying those words, the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit dashed toward the sky before vanishing from everyone's view, as if it had never been there in the first place.

Upon seeing the Skyleaf King escaping, Wu Shi and the others hurriedly prepared themselves to give chase, only to see Zhang Xuan waving his hand to stop them.

"Don't bother. Even when significantly weakened, he is not an opponent whom we can deal with easily. Furthermore, we are still in the formation, and danger lurks all around us. We can't discount the possibility that he might intentionally lead us into a trap."

Knowing that he would die if the situation continued, the Skyleaf King had forcefully undone the Coexistence of Souls despite the great damage he would sustain from doing so and fled swiftly. While the Skyleaf King would be significantly weakened from this course of action, he would still be a difficult opponent to deal with. It would be unsafe for them to face the other party now that they did not have Jiang Yuan's body to keep the other party in check.

Knowing that what Zhang Xuan said was true, Wu shi and the others gave up on pursuing the Skyleaf King as well.

"Principal Zhang, how did you notice that Combat Master Jiang has been possessed by the Skyleaf King? It shouldn't be possible to tell that much by his silence, right?" Guild Leader Han asked curiously.

While Zhang Xuan had reasoned the matter out with Jiang Yuan's silence, he could not help but feel that there was something deeper to it.

"It's simple. It should only be known among our expedition that I have killed the Stoneleaf King, but somehow, the Scarletleaf King was aware as well. The fact that he was able to pinpoint me even though my cultivation is only at Nascent Saint was very suspicious in itself. This hinted at the possibility that there was a spy among us who leaked the news to him. Furthermore, the fact that he was unfazed by the formation and his attempt to sow discord among the group at this moment... All of this speaks for itself!" Zhang Xuan replied.

Just as Guild Leader Han had guessed previously, the two points alone were not sufficient to deduce that Jiang Yuan had been possessed by the Skyleaf King. However, if they were to consider what the Scarletleaf King had said previously as well... it would all fit perfectly together.

"I see..."

The crowd turned toward Zhang Xuan with looks of admiration.

They did not even notice such minute details, and yet, the young man had actually been able to deduce so much from them. His capability was truly worthy of respect.

"What do we do now?" Wu shi asked.

While they had resolved the threat from the Skyleaf King, they still had not succeeded

in escaping from the formation yet.

"For the time being..." After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan was just about to speak when something caught his eye. "Cough cough. Feng Xun, that's enough. You don't have to hit him anymore. The Skyleaf King has already escaped, so there's no point in you beating Combat Master Jiang now."

Everyone quickly turned their gazes, and it was only at this moment that they noticed that Feng Xun was still attacking Jiang Yuan's head relentlessly, sending punches fully packed with power one after another.

His attacks were very precisely controlled to maximize pain without inducing lethality.

Feng Xun recovered from his trance, and he scratched his head awkwardly. "He has already escaped? I thought that... there was still a portion of the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit lingering within Combat Master Jiang, so I was trying to help expel it from his body."

"Since he chose to escape, he must have thoroughly severed the connection between him and Combat Master Jiang's soul beforehand." Zhang Xuan shook his head and said.

After which, he walked up to Jiang Yuan and placed his hand on the latter's wrist. A moment later, he whipped out a jade box, and in one smooth motion, he placed dozens of needles into the latter's head.

No matter what, Jiang Yuan was only a victim of this matter. It would be for the best if he could be saved.

Under the control of Zhang Xuan's zhenqi, the needles revolved on the spot. A moment later, Jiang Yuan slowly opened his eyes.

Boom!

At the same time, his aura abruptly surged. In an instant, he had actually made the breakthrough from Saint 3-dan pinnacle to Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm!

"A portion of the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit was fused with Combat Master Jiang's soul, and it ended up serving as nourishment for Combat Master Jiang after the Skyleaf King severed the connection between the both of them. That eventually served as an impetus for Combat Master Jiang's breakthrough. In a sense, this matter can be

considered a blessing in disguise," Zhang Xuan explained.

The Skyleaf King was a Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm expert, so even a small portion of his Primordial Spirit harnessed a massive amount of energy. Given how Jiang Yuan had managed to devour it, it was within expectations that he would enjoy a surge in his cultivation.

"Where am I? Why does my head hurt so much? Who was the one that beat me?" Having just woke up from his coma, Jiang Yuan fondled the back of his head, and he scanned his surroundings in confusion.

"Him!"

Everyone pointed their finger toward Feng Xun.

"..." Feng Xun

Chapter 1063

Zhang Xuan's Confession

After being pummeled so badly, how could Jiang Yuan hold himself back after learning who the culprit was? Without any hesitation, he charged right up to Feng Xun.

Granted that it was in a moment of danger that Feng Xun had done so, but Jiang Yuan was still unable to quell the rage in his heart without returning the favor!

Jiang Yuan had achieved a breakthrough to the Primordial Spirit realm, so naturally, Feng Xun could not possibly be a match for him. As a result, he was pummeled mercilessly. Unable to stand it any longer, he quickly looked to others for help.

"Principal Zhang, Wu shi, save me!"

However, Wu shi, Zhang Xuan, and the others simply averted their gazes, as if they hadn't heard the pleading at all.

"This formation sure is difficult to decipher!"

"Indeed. If we can find a way to decipher it, we will be able to escape from here."

"Isn't the weather great today?"

"A cloudless sky with a nice breeze, the perfect weather for an expedition!"

Save you? You must be joking! You sure had your fair share of fun when you pummeled him earlier, shouldn't you let Jiang Yuan vent his frustrations on you too? Otherwise, that would be really unfair for him, don't you think?

After a session of pummeling, Jiang Yuan's anger was finally quelled.

By that point, Feng Xun's head was already completely swollen, a truly hideous and miserable sight.

Seeing the state that Feng Xun was in, Zhang Xuan's eyes suddenly lit up as an idea

came to his mind. "Right! Why didn't I think of it previously? We might be unable to break the formation, but we can always have the Scarletleaf King do it for us!"

"Have the Scarletleaf King do it for us?"

The crowd was taken aback.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded. He flicked his wrist, and a bundle of formation flags appeared in his grasp.

Previously, Guild Leader Han and the others had given him a handful of grade-7 formation flags, and he still had quite a number of them remaining.

"Go."

With a formation blueprint in his mind, Zhang Xuan muttered softly, and the formations flags swiftly flew forth from his hands.

Currently, Zhang Xuan already possessed capabilities on par with a 7-star pinnacle formation master. Even though he could not set up most grade-7 pinnacle formations due to his lacking cultivation, setting up ordinary grade-7 formations was still very well within his means.

As soon as the formation flags got into position, Zhang Xuan stomped his feet forcefully on the ground.

Weng!

The formation came to a life, and a cloud of white mist swiftly shrouded the crowd.

"Principal Zhang, are you intending on concealing us in a formation so as to lure the Scarletleaf King over?" Guild Leader Han's eyes suddenly lit up upon realizing what Zhang Xuan was trying to do.

One of the main reasons why they were in such a disadvantageous position within the formation was because they were in the open whereas the enemy was hiding in the shadows. This allowed the enemy to launch wave after wave of attacks against them through controlling the formation, and they were completely helpless to retaliate against it. However, with a grade-7 formation hiding their trail, the enemy would be unable to see them. This would level the playing field, making it harder for the

Scarletleaf King to harm them through the formation.

Perhaps, this might even become the impetus for turning the tables on the Scarletleaf King.

Of course, that was easier said than done. As a 7-star pinnacle formation master, he knew full well the intricacy behind pulling that feat off.

To set up an inner formation within a larger formation was exponentially more difficult because one would need to have a near perfect understanding of the larger formation, as well as the various transformations it could pull off. Otherwise, if the conditions in the larger formation changed, the inner formation could very well unravel by itself.

Even the most talented of formation masters wouldn't dare dream of attempting it. In all likelihood, only a monster like Principal Zhang could truly pull it off.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded in response to Guild Leader Han's words.

Upon hearing the confirmation, the crowd also finally noticed what Zhang Xuan was up to, and their eyes lit up in excitement. Only Feng Xun was standing by the side with a dumbfounded look on his face.

So, this is what you have been thinking of while watching Jiang Yuan pummel me viciously?

"With this formation to conceal our trail, we don't have to worry about coming under the Scarletleaf King's attack for the time being. Let's rest while we can and recuperate," Zhang Xuan instructed.

Ever since entering the celestial palace, they had been leaping from one crisis into another. By this point, both their minds and bodies were completely exhausted.

"Alright!" Nodding, the crowd took a seat on the ground before whipping out several recovery pills and spirit stones to recuperate.

Seeing that they were finally out of danger for the time being, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He was just about to check on another one of his hypotheses regarding the formation they were trapped in when he suddenly caught a whiff of a fragrance. Turning around, he saw Luo Ruoxin walking up to him with complicated emotions in

her eyes. She hesitated for a brief moment before speaking softly.

"Thank you."

Knowing that Luo Ruoxin was thanking him for the previous matter, Zhang Xuan replied with a smile, "There's no need to stand on ceremony!"

He knew from the very start that Luo Ruoxin was not the Skyleaf King, and all he did was to speak of the truth as well.

Shaking her head, Luo Ruoxin said, "No, what I mean is thank you for believing me."

At this point, the young lady seemed to have thought of something, and a forlorn look crept onto her face. However, that look only surfaced for a moment before vanishing. Stretching out her hand, she continued. "If you wish to break this formation, I might be able to offer some help."

"Oh? You know of this formation?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

"I don't, but I do have an idea in mind. This formation is made up of many smaller formations, and if we attempt to find a way out by barging our way through the smaller formations, it is likely that we might find ourselves running in circles, unable to find the exit no matter which direction we take. To escape from a formation of this design, the best way is to leap out of the formation!" Luo Ruoxin said.

"Leap out of the formation? How can we leap out of it?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

He also understood that logic as well. If he knew how to leap out of the formation, he would have long led the expedition team out.

The Library of Heaven's Path could only reflect the flaws of the smaller formation within the door that he was presently in. It was unable to analyze the overall layout and workings of the larger formation, and without sufficient information, Zhang Xuan was unable to deduce a feasible way to leap out of the formation.

"We have been through quite a few courtyards, and every single one of them is around several hundred meters wide. Judging from the size of the celestial palace from the outside, even if we have not leaped out of it yet, we should be nearing its edge by now. However, even if we barge through a few more courtyards, chances are, we will still

find ourselves within the formation. Don't you think that it is perplexing?" Luo Ruoxin queried.

"This... You are saying that the formation also harnesses the laws of space as well?" Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed.

Indeed! Judging from the distance, they should have already escaped from the celestial palace by now. Yet, for the end to still be nowhere in sight, there was only one possibility... Spatial Formation!

"You're right! Why didn't I think of it? Ancient Sage Qiu Wu is highly skilled in spatial manipulation, and it is also due to his skill that the seals he set up in the Subterranean Gallery have been able to last for so many years. Furthermore, we encountered a Spatial Formation right after we entered, so I should guessed it." Zhang Xuan smacked his face in realization.

Considering Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's expertise in spatial manipulation, he should have long guessed that the formation that they were trapped in harnessed the laws of space as well... How could he have neglected something that was so apparent?

Excited, Zhang Xuan leaped forward to peck the young lady on the cheeks before laughing heartily. "Your words have truly opened my eyes. Thank you, Ruoxin. You are really the love of my life!"

"You..." Not expecting Zhang Xuan to suddenly make a move on her, Luo Ruoxin eyes widened, and a crimson blush spread across her face.

That fellow looked quite honest normally, so why would he... he...

"I'm not going to bother with you anymore." Luo Ruoxin turned around and walked away. It was after walking a distance away that she realized her face was burning red.

"I..." It was in a moment of excitement that Zhang Xuan had acted like so, and it was only after Luo Ruoxin left that he realized what he had just done. His face reddened in embarrassment, but touching his lips... he could still feel a soft, supple sensation.

Will she really ignore me from now on?

As someone who had no experience with romance whatsoever, Zhang Xuan could not help but panic upon hearing those words. In this moment, he seemed nothing like the

valiant man who faced the Skyleaf King squarely a moment ago.

However, he knew that this was not the moment for him to be troubled by such affairs either. He drove his Soul Depth to calm his mind before flicking his wrist, and the Myriad Anthive Queen appeared before him.

He knew next to nothing about Spatial Formations, but the Myriad Anthive Queen had been born with the innate ability to manipulate space. Perhaps, under the latter's lead, they just might be able to find an escape route.

Thus, he swiftly informed the Myriad Anthive Queen of their current plight.

The Myriad Anthive Queen nodded before lying on the ground to sniff the surroundings.

In truth, while the Myriad Anthive Queen possessed an inherent ability to manipulate space, it actually did not have much of an understanding regarding the laws of space.

To make an analogy, it was just like how bees instinctively knew that they had to build honeycombs with hexagonal shapes because it was the most efficient geometry to use, but that did not necessarily mean that they were skilled architects!

After sniffing for a moment, the Myriad Anthive Queen stood up.

"Master, we are indeed within a folded space. I think I can find the way out of here."

"Wonderful!" Hearing that the Myriad Anthive Queen indeed knew the way out, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement. He hurriedly turned around to inform Wu Shi and the others telepathically.

Very soon, everyone had gathered together discreetly.

As veterans who had braved through many battlefields, they knew how to make use of their resting time efficiently. Even though it hadn't been long since they started recuperating, they had already recovered roughly half of their strength.

"Everyone, follow the Myriad Anthive Queen closely. Make sure not to lag behind!" Zhang Xuan instructed sternly before walking over to Luo Ruoxin's side. Noting that the young lady was not intending to shun him, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. "Let's head over as well!"

Saying those words, he reached out to grab the young lady's hand.

"You..."

The young lady instinctively tried to pull her hand back, only to realize that the young man's grasp was growing tighter and tighter. She could not help but frown.

Just because she had not reprimanded him, he was getting more and more overboard.

As this thought flashed across her mind, she made up her mind to retract her hand forcefully and teach the young man a lesson. However, before she could do anything, the young man suddenly spoke.

"In the Verdant Mountain of Huanyu Empire, I met you for the first time. You were standing quietly before a waterfall, reminiscent of a beautiful ink painting. It was in that instant that I realized that I have a goal in life.

"When I saw that you were going to be attacked by the spirit beasts, I couldn't stop my feet from heading toward you. After we managed to flee from the spirit beasts, I suffered a rebound in my soul and fell unconscious, and you were the one who saved my life. But by the time I woke up, you had already left. I had no idea who you are or where you came from, and I thought that I would never meet you again. A feeling of emptiness struck me at that moment, and I felt as if I had lost something very precious to me.

"Thus, when I met you once more in the Master Teacher Academy, I felt as if my heart was going to explode. I knew that I had to ask for your name, or else I might regret it my entire life..."

Recalling the times together with the young lady, a sweet smile gradually surfaced on Zhang Xuan's lips.

He had met many charming women ever since his reincarnation. Some were graceful, some were gentle, some were domineering, some were adorable, and some even harbored some feelings toward him. But for some reason, only the young lady before him was able to evoke such emotions and nostalgia in him.

He knew that she was very important to him, and he did not want to miss his chance!

"We visited the Saint Ascension Platform together. Even though we managed to meet

Kong shi and obtain the scroll that he wrote personally, my greatest gain from that trip was actually the time that I was able to spend with you. In those days, whenever I opened my eyes after I was done cultivating, I would always see you seated serenely not too far away. In those days, we spent our time chatting with one another and discussing the flaws and strengths of cultivation techniques. To tell you the truth, I really wished that time could have stopped forever then.

"Do you know how happy I was when you said that you wanted to come to the ancient domain as well? Everyone said that it is an extremely dangerous place, and we might very well lose our lives here. But as long as I could be together with you, I would be willing to brave through any danger.

"It was in that moment that I finally realized my feelings for you. I really want to be with you. I want to spend an eternity with you."

Turning toward the young lady beside him, determination gleamed in Zhang Xuan's eyes.

"Ruoxin, won't you allow me to continue holding your hand as we tread down this long journey together?"

Chapter 1064

You Are a Good Man!

Up to this point, he still did not know the true background of the young lady before him, and the other party had never mentioned it to him. However, despite having encountered many people in the midst of his journey, his heart had only leaped for the young lady before him. It was embarrassing for him to say such words, but he did not want to let her slip past him just because of his own embarrassment.

"I..." Not expecting Zhang Xuan to suddenly say such words, Luo Ruoxin's body tensed up. "I-I need to consider..."

"Feel free to consider all you want. In any case, just know that I won't be releasing your hand." Grasping the young lady's hand firmly as if guarding his most precious treasure, Zhang Xuan smiled.

Not expecting the fellow to refuse to release her hand, Luo Ruoxin's face turned completely red. She tried to tug back her hand, but her action only caused the young man to further tighten his grip. "You... Let go!"

"I won't. Once I let go, you will start avoiding me," Zhang Xuan said determinedly.

"I promise that I won't avoid you, alright? Let go..." Luo Ruoxin looked at her surroundings anxiously, only to realize that the master teachers and the Myriad Anthive Queen had already departed and were nowhere to be seen. Within the mist, there were only the two of them. The realization of that caused her face to redden further, and she dared not look up anymore.

"I won't!" Zhang Xuan replied resolutely.

There was a brief moment of silence.

Luo Ruoxin slowly looked up, and seeing the other party's earnest and unwavering eyes, she suddenly felt a surge of warmth. "You are... a good man."

"I am not a good man. I am a baddie, a big baddie!" Zhang Xuan quickly refuted those

words.

He did not confess just to be given a good man card 1 !

"Pffft!" Luo Ruoxin burst into laughter, and in an instant, the awkwardness between them vanished.

That fellow sure was... While others were trying to show the best side of themselves in their confessions, that fellow was adamantly insisting that he was a baddie.

Where in the world could one find another who confessed in such a manner?

That silly man!

Shaking her head, Luo Ruoxin said, "Let go."

"I won't let go, not even if you beat me up!" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Unless you accept my confession!"

"You... How can you be so unreasonable?" Luo Ruoxin said in agitation.

"I am just that unreasonable. No matter what, unless you agree to my confession, I will never let go!" Zhang Xuan said adamantly.

He could tell that the young lady did not dislike him. Since that was the case, he wanted to push the matter through. Otherwise, if he were to miss this opportunity, who knew when the next one would come his way?

"You..." Luo Ruoxin did not think that Zhang Xuan would be so shameless. In that moment, she could not even tell whether she wanted to laugh or cry. Several thoughts flashed across her mind, and her face sunk a little. "I don't dislike you, but... I have my difficulties. If you were to choose me, you will be put through much suffering, and even so, we might still not end up together. Despite knowing this, are you still willing to tread down this path?"

"I am!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "All along, you have never said a word about your identity, and you have never revealed your true strength either. I know that you have your own considerations for doing so, so I won't ask you to tell me everything. However, I hope that you can trust me on this. I won't allow anyone to get in our way. Even if the world stands in our way, I will shatter the heavens into pieces!"

Be it in his previous life or his current one, he had never been one to look back after making up his mind. This was the belief that he had lived by. It was either he chose to stay out of it altogether, or else he would persist with his decision and walk it to the very end!

Even death would not change his mind!

It was also with this belief that he managed to advance from an ordinary teacher in Tianxuan Kingdom to a 6-star pinnacle master teacher and the principal of a Master Teacher Academy within less than a year, becoming a figure respected and admired by many.

"You..." Despite the lack of contemplation from Zhang Xuan before his response, his words were filled with utmost resolution and earnestness. Luo Ruoxin's eyes could not help but redden as sweetness spread from her heart. She halted for a brief moment before nodding her head slightly.

"Alright, I will tread down this long journey along with you..."

So what if the future is unknown?

So what if the road ahead is filled with thorns?

As long as I have your company while walking down this road, it will suffice!

Even if the road leads to the edge of a cliff, even if our paths must diverge at the very end... at the very least, we have faced the world together.

"Really?" Hearing Luo Ruoxin's response, Zhang Xuan was stunned. For a long moment, he could not believe ears. Then, all of a sudden, he leaped up and held the young lady up in his arms as he spun her around twice on the spot.

"Really." Seeing how the young man before her was acting so childishly, Luo Ruoxin chuckled softly.

Having placed aside her worries, she decided to look straight ahead. There was no point worrying about the future now. They would just have to deal with it when it came their way.

The young man had said that he had fallen in love with her the first time he met her,

but the same could be said about her as well. The first time she met him, she felt that something had struck a chord in her heart.

Those spirit beasts had come to repay her kindness, but he thought that they had intended her harm. Despite possessing unspectacular strength, he had still rushed right in and forcefully dragged her away to flee. Truly, his silliness was a little adorable.

After that, they had been through all kinds of experiences together, such as going to the Saint Ascension Platform together and meeting Kong shi. There were so many others whom she could have found to accompany her there, but she had found herself looking toward him instead. Who could say whether it was that little desire in her heart that swayed her decision?

Having said everything that she wanted to say, she felt an incredible feeling of lightness and happiness.

Chuckling, Zhang Xuan carefully placed the young lady down. "Alright, let's proceed ahead. Otherwise, we might not make it in time."

The Myriad Anthive Queen had already found the exit and was in the midst of leading the others over. If they were to continue dilly-dallying, they might just end up trapped there forever, unable to escape.

"Un." Luo Ruoxin nodded.

Grasping onto the hand of the young lady tightly, Zhang Xuan led Luo Ruoxin forward with widened strides.

He was the one who set up the formation, so he could easily sense where the others were heading. After circling a few rounds on the spot, an object that resembled a door came into sight.

It was the exit that the Myriad Anthive Queen had found and torn open.

The duo quickly stepped into it.

Hu!

A moment later, a massive waterfall appeared before their eyes. Swiftly turning around, they saw the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion ravaging behind their backs. They

had returned to the entrance of the celestial palace.

"We have managed to escape from the formation!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in agitation.

Even though he had deduced it to be a feasible solution, he had not been entirely sure that it would work. It was only when they finally got out that the burden weighing down on his heart finally lifted, and he heaved a sigh of relief.

The formation within the celestial palace was simply too powerful, such that even he was helpless before it.

"Wait a moment, the celestial palace isn't real?"

"That... You're right! Why didn't we notice it before?"

...

Shocked voices sounded from Wu shi and the others.

They had left the formation earlier than Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin, and they were currently staring at the celestial palace with a flabbergasted look.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan also lifted his gaze to look at the celestial palace, and what he saw left him completely stunned.

Just like before, the celestial palace was still floating right before the massive waterfall. However, unlike what they saw before, it was currently hung on the top of the cliff together with the waterfall, as if an oil painting.

"The celestial palace is actually... a painting? In other words, we were inside a painting earlier?" Zhang Xuan widened his mouth in shock.

"Legend has it that upon reaching the very peak, a painter is able to create a world within their painting, and the lifeforms they can depict are able to reproduce and further their kind, just like humans. I always thought that it was just an exaggeration, but to think that it would actually be true..." Guild Leader Han gulped down a mouthful of saliva.

"Indeed. If I had not witnessed this with my own eyes, I never would have believed

that this would actually be possible," Wu shi said hoarsely.

As a 7-star formation master and 7-star master teacher, there was no doubt that they were knowledgeable. Yet, upon seeing the painting of the celestial palace, they could not help but display expressions reminiscent of a child seeing the world for the very first time.

"Look, is that the Scarletleaf King?" someone among the crowd suddenly exclaimed with a hushed voice.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze over, and as expected, he saw a figure sitting on a stone pillar above the waterfall with his eyes tightly closed, seemingly searching for something.

Gazing at the Scarletleaf King, who sat motionlessly on the stone pillar, a thought suddenly came to Zhang Xuan. The formation that I have set up has obstructed his vision and Spiritual Perception. Perhaps, he still doesn't know that we have already escaped...

The formation within the celestial palace was at least at grade-8. Even if the Scarletleaf King was able to gain ownership of it, it would still be extremely difficult for him to fully control with his Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivation.

As such, it would be extremely difficult for him to kill the entire expedition team just by himself. It was for this reason that he had intentionally tried to turn them against one another so that they would diminish their own forces, making it easier for him to deal with them.

Zhang Xuan turned around and addressed the crowd. "He hasn't noticed us yet. Let's quickly find a place to hide first. I will try to approach him and see if I can find an opportunity to kill him."

"Principal Zhang, we'll go along with you!" Wu shi and Guild Leader Han stepped forward and volunteered themselves.

They were the two strongest experts of the expedition team, and if anyone among them could match the Scarletleaf King, it could only be them.

"There's no need for that. I have a plan in mind, so it won't be convenient for me to bring you with me. Don't worry, if I am unable to hold on anymore, I will definitely call

the both of you over!" Zhang Xuan replied.

The Scarletleaf King was bound to be even stronger than the Jadeleaf King. If he became desperate, even with the combined strength of Wu shi and Guild Leader Han, it was hard to say whether they would be a match for him. Since that was the case, it would be best for him to avoid a direct encounter. This way, the risk could be minimized, and there would be more room for him to maneuver around as well.

Wu shi and Guild Leader Han knew that the young man must have had an idea in mind to say such words. Thus, after a brief moment of hesitation, the both of them nodded.

"Alright then."

"Be careful!" Luo Ruoxin said.

Zhang Xuan directed a confident smile at Luo Ruoxin before leading the expedition team to a safe hiding place some distance away. After settling everyone down, he left the group to find a remote place.

Geji! Geji!

In a few moments, he turned into the form of the Violetleaf King.

Not even Feng Xun was aware that he had turned the Jadeleaf King against the Stoneleaf King after disguising as the Violetleaf King. Naturally, Jiang Yuan was unaware of the matter as well, and so was the Scarletleaf King.

As such, disguising as the Violetleaf King would be the ideal way to catch the Scarletleaf King off guard.

Hu!

Flying ahead, Zhang Xuan soon arrived in the vicinity of the stone pillar where the Scarletleaf King was. He quickly used his Eye of Insight to scan the area.

Just as he had deduced, the stone pillar was indeed the core of the celestial palace. The person on top of it would gain control of the massive formation within the celestial palace.

"Violetleaf King? Why are you here?"

Just as Zhang Xuan was still surveying the surroundings, the Scarletleaf King's voice suddenly sounded.

"Reporting to the Scarletleaf King, while conducting the mission entrusted to me by His Majesty, I uncovered vital intelligence in the Poison Hall. In order to avoid alarming anyone, I could only lie low and observe quietly from the dark. Finally, my efforts paid off, so I quickly rushed here as fast as I could!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Vital intelligence? What kind of vital intelligence?" the Scarletleaf King asked.

In his view, while the expedition team had used a grade-7 formation to conceal their trail, it was not a matter of great concern at all. In any case, it was impossible for them to escape from the painting without knowledge of the laws of space, so he did not even think of doubting the authenticity of the Violetleaf King before his eyes.

Zhang Xuan carefully scanned his surroundings before whispering in a lowered voice, "It is regarding the map."

"It is regarding the map?" The Scarletleaf King narrowed his eyes before leaping up in agitation. "Where is it?"

"Calm down for a moment and allow me to finish speaking first. Based on the news that I have received, the booklet obtained by the Skyleaf King is only an introduction and not the complete map of the ancient domain. It is said that the real map was taken away by Wu Yangzi more than two thousand years ago," Zhang Xuan said.

"You're right. The Skyleaf King has already learned of this matter from the mouths of Zhang Yinqiu and the others!" Seeing that his intelligence was the same as what the other party had, the Scarletleaf King nodded.

Zhang Xuan heart jolted, but not the slightest hint of it could be seen on his face. Instead, with a curious look, he asked the Scarletleaf King, "Zhang Yinqiu? That old principal of the Master Teacher Academy... isn't dead yet?"

The Scarletleaf King shook his head. "Of course not! That fellow is currently trapped at the deepest region of the ancient domain together with the Skyleaf King and the others. Without the map, no one is able to enter or exit, so they can only bide their time there."

"The Skyleaf King is trapped in the ancient domain? Then, in the Poison Hall..." Zhang

Xuan was taken aback.

Didn't the Skyleaf King just head to the Poison Hall a while ago? Furthermore, they had just met several minutes ago. If even a severed portion of his Primordial Spirit could escape from the ancient domain, surely the Skyleaf King himself should have been able to do so!

"The Skyleaf King knew that he would face grave danger here, so two years ago, before he entered the ancient domain, he left a portion of his soul outside. Firstly, it was to ensure his survival even if his main Primordial Spirit dies within the ancient domain. Secondly, it also serves as an effective medium of communication to the rest of us. Most of the intelligence that we have originates from him," replied the Scarletleaf King.

Chapter 1065

The Scarletleaf King Coughs Blood

"I see..." Hearing that explanation, Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

No wonder!

He had been wondering why the Skyleaf King would choose to send his severed Primordial Spirit after them when it would have been safer for him to do it personally, especially for something as important as the map. It turned out that it was not that he did not want to do so, but he could not! Trapped in the depths of the ancient domain, he had no choice but to leave this job to his severed Primordial Spirit.

A thought came to Zhang Xuan's mind. Having reached the Leaving Aperture realm, the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit is capable for existing for extended periods of time outside of his body. However, that is not the case for the severed Primordial Spirit. Inevitably, it is weaker and unstabler than a complete Primordial Spirit, so it is incapable of surviving independently for too long a period of time. Perhaps, the severed Primordial Spirit was hiding in the Earthleaf King's body back then.

It was possible for the Primordial Spirits of Leaving Aperture realm cultivators to survive independently, but the same could not be said for severed ones.

Most likely, the Skyleaf King had sneaked into Jingyuan City while possessing the Earthleaf King.

Later on, when the severed Primordial Spirit realized that what he had received was only an introduction and not the full map, he decided to possess Jiang Yuan's body and infiltrate the expedition team. He deeply believed that the map was within the expedition team, and he was hoping to steal the map once it appeared.

If not for that reason, the severed Primordial Spirit would have probably killed them long ago when it had the chance to do so.

After finishing his story, the Scarletleaf King looked at the contemplating Violetleaf King and asked, "So, where is the map?"

"According to what I know, it seems like the map is in the hands of that fellow who goes by the name of Zhang Xuan!" replied Zhang Xuan.

"Zhang Xuan?" The Scarletleaf King shook his head. "The Skyleaf King has been paying close attention to him, and while that fellow has many tricks up his sleeves, it is unlikely that the map is in his hands. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been trapped in the celestial palace in the first place!"

While that Zhang Xuan had been able to lead the expedition team through trial after trial, it was mainly through his wits. It was unlikely that he had the map on his map.

Otherwise, he would have long reached the depths of the ancient domain!

Zhang Xuan shook his head and replied, "He doesn't know about the map, but the map is definitely in his hands!"

"Oh?" the Scarletleaf King frowned in incomprehension.

"That fellow managed to obtain Wu Yangzi's inheritance, and the map was within it as well. However, as he could not understand the language of the ancient gods, he was unable to make sense of it, so he was unaware of the ties between it and the ancient domain. As such, he ended up not using it at all," Zhang Xuan explained.

"This..." The Scarletleaf King was taken aback.

He had never considered such a possibility.

The Scarletleaf King pondered for a moment before asking, "Where did you obtain this information?"

"I infiltrated the ranks of the humans a while ago and headed to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to confirm this matter. I am very certain of the intelligence I have procured!" Zhang Xuan said confidently.

"What you said isn't entirely impossible..." The eyes of the Scarletleaf King lit up. "If what you say is true, I will report your contribution to His Majesty and request that he reward you handsomely! Alright, wait here for a moment. I will rip apart the formation that fellow set up and apprehend him..."

"Wait a moment," Zhang Xuan hurriedly interjected. "Even though I am certain the

map is in Zhang Xuan's hand, I cannot confirm where he placed it or whether it is with him at the moment or not. After all, he is unaware of the ties between the map and the ancient domain, so it won't be odd if he chose to leave it in his academy."

"Hmm..." The Scarletleaf King mused over those words.

The Violetleaf King was right. If that Zhang Xuan fellow was unaware of the connection between the map and the ancient domain, given the dangers of the ancient domain, he might have chosen to leave it behind in the Master Teacher Academy so that it could be passed down to others even if something were to happen to him. If so, that would be a huge trouble.

"Why don't we do this instead? Doesn't the Skyleaf King have the introduction to the ancient domain? I think we can use it to obtain the true map," Zhang Xuan suggested.

The Scarletleaf King frowned. "Use it to obtain the true map? How?"

If there was such a convenient method, they would have long used it.

"Sage Clans possess certain means to find their lost kin through resonance in their unique bloodline. Since the introduction and the map are both written using the language of the ancient gods, I believe that it might be possible to induce a resonance between the two and find the map. It is because of this that I went to the effort of looking up and learning one such secret art back when I was at the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. As long as I am in physical contact with the introduction, I am confident that I will be able to locate the whereabouts of the map!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Resonance in their unique bloodline... I did hear that there was such a thing among the Sage Clans. Well, I am a little doubtful as to whether the technique can be extended toward the introduction and map, but there should be no harm giving it a go." The Scarletleaf King frowned for a moment before eventually nodding. Flicking his wrist, he passed a jade box over and said, "Here is the introduction to the ancient domain. The Skyleaf King left it with me earlier on."

As the Skyleaf King had chosen to possess Jiang Yuan's body, naturally, he could not have kept the introduction with him. Thus, he had chosen to entrust it to the second strongest member of the Ten Great Kings, the Scarletleaf King.

"Alright." Taking the jade box, Zhang Xuan opened it lightly and took a look inside, and

his eyes lit up.

There was an ancient book within that deeply resembled the map he had received from Wu Yangzi's inheritance. There was no doubt that they had come from the same origin.

Zhang Xuan lightly placed his finger on it, and the knowledge harnessed within it immediately surged into his mind.

It was written in the same incomprehensible language used for the map, making it nigh impossible to understand what was being written within.

I should be able to find a thing or two by examining it closely.

The introduction had quite a few flaws reflected, and by comparing the words, he would be able to understand some of the content. However, he knew that this was not the time to do so.

Casually closing the jade box, Zhang Xuan turned to the Scarletleaf King once more and said, "Actually... to use the secret art, I will have to set up a grade-7 pinnacle formation. As you know, my understanding of formations is far beneath yours, so I might require your help later on..."

"Set up a formation? Alright." The Scarletleaf King nodded.

Just by how the Scarletleaf King was able to control the massive formation in the celestial palace showed that he had a deep understanding of formations.

"Un. I will tell you where the flags should be positioned. I will have to trouble you to help me set it up," Zhang Xuan said as he retrieved a couple of grade-7 formation flags from his storage ring.

"Alright," the Scarletleaf King replied as he took the formation flags from Zhang Xuan's hands.

"30 meters to the left, at the Jiaxu position. After that, 27 meters to the right, at the Hangu position..." Zhang Xuan began reciting.

The terms that he was using were precise terminologies often used by 7-star formation masters. Those who had some mastery in formations would know of them.

Hearing the Violetleaf King listing out the precise positionings of the formation flags, the Scarletleaf King could not help but be impressed. Driving his zhenqi, he carefully nailed each and every one of the formation flags in place.

Halfway through the construction of the formation, the Scarletleaf King suddenly noticed something, and he frowned. "Wait a moment, something is wrong. Why does this formation resemble a Slaughter Formation?"

Even though the formation that the Violetleaf King was asking him to set up was foreign to him, through his deep understanding of formations, he was still able to deduce its core function, and it appeared to be a Slaughter Formation!

Weren't they going to set up a formation to find the map?

Why were they constructing a Slaughter Formation instead?

In that instant, doubts filled the Scarletleaf King's mind.

"Slaughter Formation? How could that be? Scarletleaf King, you are worrying unnecessarily. While the formation might resemble a Slaughter Formation, you will soon notice that it is something else entirely once it is activated."

"Something entirely else? This setup can be nothing but a Slaughter Formation! These three formation flags serve to draw in the handle of the Big Dipper whereas these positions serve to trigger the Malignant Star." The Scarletleaf King frowned. "Once trapped within it, not even a Half-Leaving Aperture realm would be able to escape from it easily."

"If you look at from that perspective, it does resemble a Slaughter Formation. However, if you look at it from below, it will be an entirely different sight altogether. This is also where the brilliance of the formation lies. If you don't believe me, come here and take a look!" Zhang Xuan moved to the center of the formation and placed a formation flag there before beckoning the Scarletleaf King over with a smile.

"Un." the Scarletleaf King was perplexed by what the Violetleaf King was up to, but he still moved toward the latter nevertheless.

In any case, the Violetleaf King was there as well, and the formation was still incomplete, so it was impossible for the other party to activate it and use it against him.

"Stay here and don't move. Look in that direction... That's right... Alright, I am going to move the formation flags right now, and once you see it, you will understand the profoundness of the formation..."

Seeing that the Scarletleaf King had gotten into position, Zhang Xuan slowly backed away and flew up while shouting, "Make sure not to move. If you move, you won't get a clear glimpse of what that is going to happen. Yes, it's that direction..."

Before finishing his words, he had already whipped out several more formation flags, and the formation flags abruptly burst forth in multiple locations.

"That is... Hundred Flags of Void Sealing? You aren't the Violetleaf King! Who are you?" The Scarletleaf King was standing still on the ground, waiting for whatever the Violetleaf King was going to show him when he suddenly noticed the formation flags in the latter's hand flying in multiple directions. His eyes immediately narrowed in wariness, and zhenqi burst forth from his body.

At this point, it was apparent that something was amiss.

Hundred Flags of Void Sealing was a technique that allowed formation masters to swiftly set up a formation so that it could be instantaneously utilized in the midst of a battle. However, it was an advanced ability that only 7-star formation masters could possibly pull off. Considering how the Violetleaf King didn't specialize in formations, how could he possibly be capable of using it?

Obviously, the fellow before him was not the real Violetleaf King!

Sou sou sou sou!

He immediately stepped against the ground to leap toward the fake Violetleaf King to end his life, but in that instant, the latter abruptly stomped his leg lightly.

Hong long!

The formation came to life, and tides of sword qi immediately came surging in his direction.

"You..." The Scarletleaf King narrowed his eyes in horror, unable to believe what he had just seen.

As a 7-star pinnacle formation master, he was capable of pulling off the Hundred Flags of Void Sealing as well. However... to be able to activate a formation with just a stomp of his feet, how did the other party manage to do it? It was inconceivable!

Him willingly stepping into the formation in the first place was based on the notion that there was no one in the world who could activate a formation so quickly. Even if the Violetleaf King meant him harm, he should have been able to escape in time.

Yet, who could have known that not only was the other party capable of pulling off the Hundred Flags of Void Sealing, he could even activate the formation so swiftly, leaving him no time to escape at all?

Peng!

Before he could react, he was already struck in his chest by the sword qi, and blood gushed forth from his wounds.

He had managed to prevent the sword qi from wounding his vitals, but he was left in a terribly unkempt state. His composure had disappeared without a trace.

Gritting his teeth, the Scarletleaf King roared furiously, "Who in the world are you?"

To think that the second strongest expert of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings would end up being fooled by another like that! So much rage was coursing through the Scarletleaf King's veins that he felt as if he could explode at any moment.

"Who am I? I am the person whom you are trying to kill!" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he reverted back to his original appearance.

"You are... Zhang Xuan? But... that killing intent... how did you..." The Scarletleaf King was so shocked that he found himself unable to speak coherently.

Humans were unable to cultivate the Zhenqi of Slaughter, so how could the other party emanate killing intent like them? Not to mention, the purity of it was even on par with Otherworldly Demon Kings like them!

At this moment, the Scarletleaf King suddenly thought of something else, and his body shook. "You... You killed the Violetleaf King?"

Right after saying those words, the young man outside of the formation stroked his

lower jaw in embarrassment and said, "That... It isn't just the Violetleaf King. Other than you and the Skyleaf King, the remaining members of the Ten Great Kings have all died by my hand!"

"Pu!"

The Scarletleaf King spurted blood.

Chapter 1066

Fusing the Maps

The Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage had all reached Saint 4-dan at the very minimum, and they were existences who could individually cause a great calamity anywhere, even in Qingyuan Conferred Empire.

With the Ten Great Kings moving in this operation, he had thought that they would be able to snatch the ancient domain easily and inflict great damage upon Qingyuan Conferred Empire while they were at it.

Yet, eight of the Kings had died before they could even cause the slightest stir. They thought that the Master Teacher Pavilion or Combat Master Hall might have caught wind of their movements and dispatched experts to eliminate them, thus resulting in their deaths. But who knew that they were killed by a mere Nascent Saint master teacher?

The more the Scarletleaf King thought about the matter, the more stifled he felt.

It is fortunate that the Qingtian Emperor was unaware of this matter! If he were to learn of it, would he faint from anger on the spot?

Just what kind of grudge did the other party have against them, to be hunting down their Ten Great Kings one after another?

I don't want to explore the ancient domain anymore. I want to go home...

The Scarletleaf King felt deeply dismayed, but the situation did not allow him any time to wallow in his emotions.

He was the one who had set up a huge portion of the grade-7 pinnacle formation, so he fully understood the might that it wielded. Even with the means that he possessed, he knew that he would not last for long against the might of the formation. He had to escape as soon as he could.

At that moment, however, the voice of the young man sounded from above. "Guild

Leader Han, come over here and control the formation. Kill that fellow as fast as possible..."

Right after those words sounded, the might of the formation suddenly intensified, as if it was driven by some greater power.

"You..." The face of the Scarletleaf King paled.

While he was the one who had set up the formation, he was not too familiar with its entire layout and its various transformations. It would take at least an hour before he could find the Life Gate and escape.

As the other party was only at Nascent Saint, it would have been extremely strenuous for him to drive a grade-7 pinnacle formation. Given so, the Scarletleaf King would still have been able to cope for the time being. However, if it was Guild Leader Han who was driving the formation, he might really just meet his end there!

On top of being a Saint 4-dan pinnacle expert, that fellow was the head of a Formation Master Guild, a true expert of formations! With the formation being controlled by such a skilled and powerful individual, his chances of escaping were as good as null!

While the Scarletleaf King was despairing, outside the formation, the eyes of Guild Leader Han and the others were gleaming in excitement.

When they heard Zhang Xuan's shout, they immediately leaped out of their hiding spots and dashed toward the waterfall. As soon as they arrived, they found the Scarletleaf King trapped within an extremely powerful Slaughter Formation!

With the sheer might of the Slaughter Formation, they could easily kill the Scarletleaf King as long as they were to control properly.

While driving the formation, Guild Leader Han couldn't help but turn to Zhang Xuan and ask, "Principal Zhang, if I am not mistaken, this formation should be at grade-7 pinnacle, right? Were... were you the one who set it up?"

Out of fear that they would be noticed by the Scarletleaf King, they had chosen to hide quite a distance away, so they were unaware of how Zhang Xuan had managed to deal with the Scarletleaf King.

The Slaughter Formation before him could be considered one of the stronger ones

even among the grade-7 formations, and even with his proficiency of formations, it would have taken him an extremely long time to set up it perfectly. Principal Zhang was only a Nascent Saint, so how could he have done it so quickly?

The humble Zhang Xuan shook his head, not taking credit for what he had not done. "I wasn't the one who set the formation up. The Scarletleaf King was the one who did it..."

"The Scarletleaf King?"

The crowd was dumbfounded.

To set up a formation just to trap himself in... Was that fellow sick in the mind?

"Perhaps he might have grown tired of the vicissitudes of life, so he wanted to seek an end... Who knows what could be going through the minds of those Otherworldly Demons?" Zhang Xuan shrugged nonchalantly.

He could not talk too much about how he had managed to trick the Scarletleaf King as it would be difficult to explain how he had managed to disguise as the Violetleaf King.

Leaving Guild Leader Han and Wu Shi to drive the formation, Zhang Xuan retreated to the back of the crowd to find a remote place to sit down. After which, he immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path to carefully examine the booklet containing an introduction of the ancient domain, which he had just obtained from the Scarletleaf King's hands.

The booklet was also written in the language of the ancient gods, as the Scarletleaf King had claimed, so he could not understand a single character. However, he could roughly tell that there were quite a few words that were similar to the one written on Wu Yangzi's map.

Flicking his wrist, an ancient sheet of goatskin appeared in his hands. On it was a map that was labelled with all kinds of bizarre words.

Studying the map carefully, Zhang Xuan frowned in bewilderment. There is nothing similar between what is depicted on the map and the geographical terrain of the ancient domain.

While he could not recognize the words written on the goatskin, he could still

interpret the geographical terrain on it... but there was not the slightest semblance to the ancient domain they were in!

It was also for this reason that he did not think that there was a connection between the map and the ancient domain.

The map should be several dozen millennia old by now. Could it be that the world has changed since the crafting of the map, resulting in its geography changing entirely? Zhang Xuan hypothesized.

Continents and oceans persisted through the ages, but they were not unchanging. They would gradually be reshaped with the passing of time or a major natural disaster. Could that have happened to the ancient domain as well?

That thought did not persist for too long before Zhang Xuan shook his head. That isn't right. We are in a folded space, and there are no tectonic plates or natural disasters that could cause such a significant reshaping of the geographical terrain.

Different from the external world, folded spaces were unaffected by the changes of nature. Furthermore, the ancient domain mainly consisted of formations, so even if there were changes over time, it couldn't possibly have been so thorough such that there wasn't the slightest resemblance.

"Hmm..." Frowning deeply, Zhang Xuan continued staring deeply into the goatskin and the booklet, and all of a sudden, he seemed to notice that there was something very similar about the two.

A thought came to his mind, and he placed both items together.

Weng!

With a soft buzz, the map and the booklet fused together, and in the blink of an eye, a new goatskin map appeared before Zhang Xuan.

This... The map was actually divided into two?

It was no wonder he could not understand either part of it individually. It turned out that they were each just a half of the full map.

Lifting the newly-formed goatskin up, he noticed that the features of the map had

changed completely.

At some point, Feng Xun had walked up behind him, and pointing at the features on the map, he could not help but exclaim in astonishment, "Isn't that the lava from the very start? And that is the Unbounded World, the lightning formation, and the Black Sandstorm of Oblivion!"

"Un." Even without Feng Xun pointing them out, Zhang Xuan could tell with his own eyes. The newly-formed goatskin map contained vivid images of the various features of the ancient domain, so much so that it looked as if the entire scenery had been brought to life.

"This red line... is the correct path? There is actually such a road? Why didn't we notice it before?" Feng Xun remarked.

After hearing those words, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze over and saw a faint red line leading from the lava all the way through the ancient domain.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "The red line is indeed the correct path through the ancient domain, but most likely, it wouldn't have appeared in the first place if we didn't have the map in our possession."

If they had the complete map before entering the ancient domain, they would have been able to advance along the path laid out by the red line safely without encountering any danger. It was not that they were not sharp enough to notice the existence of a safe path, but that the path would not have appeared in the first place without the complete map in hand.

This was probably another manipulation of the laws of space, so he couldn't say for sure how it worked either.

Tracing the map, they soon saw the celestial palace.

"So, the crux of the ancient domain lies just beyond the waterfall..." After confirming the direction and road, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Standing up, he turned to Guild Leader Han and the others.

With Guild Leader Han and Wu shi working together to drive the grade-7 pinnacle Slaughter Formation, it did not take them too long to kill the Scarletleaf King.

If the Fireleaf King was pitiful for being crushed to death by the Golden Origin Cauldron before he could do anything, the Scarletleaf King definitely topped that.

To be killed by the formation that he had constructed himself... the second strongest expert of the Ten Great Kings sure died an indignant death.

In any case, after dealing with the Scarletleaf King, the crowd heaved a sigh of relief.

"Let's go. Now that we have the map in hand, we should be safe," Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

After which, he raised his hand, and the goatskin map in his hands flew into the air before forming a rainbow bridge that bypassed the celestial palace, leading straight into the depths of the waterfall.

"Let's go!" Beckoning the others along, Zhang Xuan took the lead and stepped onto the bridge. A moment later, he recalled something, and with a grasp, he retrieved the formation flags used for the Slaughter Formation, stowing it into his storage ring. At the same time, with a slight flick of his finger, the Scarletleaf King's storage ring fell into his hands.

The second strongest expert of the Ten Great Kings should have quite a few good items in his possession. It would have been a waste to leave it there.

Advancing along the bridge, they soon bypassed the celestial palace and stepped through the waterfall.

Back then, they noticed that the waterfall and the celestial palace were actually a massive painting. Walking past it, the scenery abruptly changed, and a massive palace came into sight.

"What concentrated spiritual energy..." Upon stepping in, Zhang Xuan felt his pores widening as his zhenqi pulsed in excitement.

The spiritual energy contained within the palace was truly concentrated, to the point that it felt as if it would condense into water at any moment. If one were to cultivate there, one would be able to advance one's cultivation swiftly even without using high-tier spirit stones.

"Is that... carved using spirit stones?"

After taking a few steps forward, the breathing of the crowd suddenly hastened.

Ahead of them was a massive tablet, which emanated a brilliant glow. Astonishingly, it was actually carved out of a massive high-tier spirit stone!

"Is there such a huge spirit stone in the world?"

Everyone gulped down a mouthful of saliva. Even Zhang Xuan's eyes were widened.

The tablet was six meters tall, two meters wide, and half a meter thick. Such a massive tablet was actually made solely out of high-tier spirit stones. It was truly a shocking sight.

Even the largest high-tier spirit stone he had seen thus far was only the size of a baby's fist, but this sculpture should easily weigh more than a ton.

If it were to be divided into the standard size of a spirit stone, how many pieces would it be?

A few hundred thousand? A few million?

To encounter something as extravagant at this barely after walking into the palace... Just what kind of treasures would be hidden within?

"Qiu Wu Palace... Could the creator of this ancient domain be Ancient Sage Qiu Wu?"

Upon seeing the words carved on the tablet, Wu Shi's eyebrows leaped up in astonishment.

Zhang Xuan swiftly turned to look at the tablet as well, and carved on it were three large words, 'Qiu Wu Palace'. The handwriting was identical to the one within the manual of the Unbounded Voyager.

"It seems like it was indeed left behind by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu."

Zhang Xuan shot a glance toward Luo Ruoxin, and both of them nodded harmoniously.

It was just a deduction they made earlier, but at this point, they could be absolutely certain of it.

Chapter 1067

The Depths of the Ancient Domain

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu? Who is he?" one of the combat masters asked.

As this matter concerned ancient history, other than master teachers, there were very few who knew much about him.

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was one of Kong shi's followers. He accompanied Kong shi into many battlefields and slaughtered innumerable Otherworldly Demons. Possessing a cultivation surpassing Saint 9-dan back when he was still alive, he was one of the most esteemed and respected ancient sages in the history of the Master Teacher Pavilion," Wu shi explained.

"Kong shi's follower?"

"Beyond Saint 9-dan?"

Those who were not aware of it previously were astonished.

Putting everything else aside, just that description was sufficient for the crowd to imagine Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's standing.

As one who stood beside Kong shi, he must have had many opportunities to receive Kong shi's guidance, so he was bound to have been far stronger than those of the same cultivation realm. Not only so, he was even an expert surpassing Saint 9-dan. It was no wonder the ancient domain that he built was so fearsome, such that it nearly annihilated their entire expedition team!

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu is not only strong, he also contributed greatly to humanity as well. The seals that ward off the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe in the Subterranean Gallery were all constructed by him. Even the head of our branch, Pavilion Master Gou, is a loyal fan of his. If he knew that this ancient domain was created by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, he surely would have come here personally," Wu shi said.

"With his overwhelming strength, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was able to keep the

Otherworldly Demonic Tribe at bay for so many millennia. He is indeed one of the most outstanding predecessors of our Master Teacher Pavilion."

"Indeed. His accomplishments are only second to the great Kong shi."

...

Upon hearing of the deeds of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, the eyes of the crowd lit up in reverence.

The main responsibility of combat masters and master teachers was to protect mankind from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. Were it not for Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's seals, mankind wouldn't have possibly been able to enjoy such a long period of peace.

They had thought that the ancient domain had been left behind by a normal Saint realm pinnacle expert, but who would have thought that it was actually someone as great as Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!

"If there is a sculpture of Elder Qiu Wu within this ancient domain, I will definitely kowtow to him to pay my respects," Feng Xun said in agitation.

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was figure whom he deeply respected as well, and he had never imagined that a day would come when he would have the privilege of entering the ancient domain left behind by the other party!

"Me too..."

The other combat masters also nodded in agreement.

"Since Elder Qiu Wu has left behind such a massive ancient domain, he must have left his will somewhere as well. Let's continue advancing ahead. According to what the Scarletleaf King said, the old principal and the others aren't dead yet, they are just trapped at the moment. However, it appears that the Skyleaf King is also trapped together with them, so let's hurry over in case any mishap occurs," said Zhang Xuan, holding back his urge to dig up the tablet and put it in his storage ring.

As valuable as the tablet was, considering the look of reverence that the master teachers and combat masters were directing toward it, if he were to take it, they would definitely pit their life against him. Thus, after careful contemplation, he decided to drop the idea.

"Alright!"

Nodding, the crowd continued walking forward.

Barely after taking a few steps, the eyes of a combat master suddenly lit up as he pointed at the ground beside him excitedly. "Look at this!"

Following the direction that the combat master was pointing in, there was a spear deeply lodged into the wall. Only a half of it was revealed outside.

Wu shi walked over and gently pulled the spear out from the wall.

"This is... a Half-Saint weapon?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in shock.

Just like the Glacier Rain Sword, the spear was actually at Half-Saint tier as well!

Such weapons were rare even in Qingyuan Conferred Empire. Yet, in the ancient domain, it was casually tossed along the road as if it was nothing more than trash. This level of extravagance was really terrifying.

"There's one over there as well!"

In the midst of his shock, another shout sounded from the side, and following which, a Half-Saint sword was retrieved from the wall on the other side.

"There's one here too..."

"This one over here is a Saint low-tier artifact..."

Advancing ahead, more and more shocked exclamations sounded. Before long, everyone had a weapon that was of at least Half-Saint tier in their hands, and a couple of luckier ones even managed to obtain Saint low-tier weapons.

Saint low-tier, that was the tier which the Golden Origin Cauldron had been in before being upgraded. For a weapon of that level to be tossed casually around was truly bewildering to the crowd.

"The spirits within these weapons seem to have dissipated after suffering heavy blows. While these Half-Saint and Saint low-tier weapons possess outstanding sharpness and durability, they won't be able to exert their full prowess without any

spirit within them," Wu shi remarked after taking a look at all of the weapons.

While these weapons were extremely high-tiered, they were devoid of spirit, and that would result in a significant reduction in their might.

"It's not that the spirits have dissipated after suffering heavy blows but that they have been worn out by the passing of time."

The spirits within weapons enjoyed a greater longevity than humans, but they still suffered from Senescence Decline. As time passed, the spirit would still gradually erode.

There was nothing in this world that could last for an eternity.

The only reason the Golden Origin Cauldron could survive several millennia was because it had spent most of its time in hibernation, and this had helped it to reduce its Senescence Decline.

Such knowledge involved the intricacies of the soul, so most master teachers weren't aware of it either.

"Alright, let's continue moving on..."

After stowing the weapons into their storage rings, Zhang Xuan and the others continued forward. Along the way, they found quite a few medicinal herbs and artifacts too.

However, just like the weapons from before, their spirits had eroded, resulting in their diminished effectiveness. Even so, they would be able to fetch quite a fortune when sold, so the expedition team still collected them.

It was hard to tell whether it was due to them treading on the safe path or the final passageway was supposed to be like that, but they did not encounter any danger along the path. After walking for some time, a vast square appeared before their eyes.

The square was filled with many depressions and debris. There were also dozens of corpses scattered around the area.

"There was an intense fight here." The crowd narrowed their eyes in alarm.

Walking up one of the corpses, Wo Tianqiong exclaimed in alarm, "This is... Vice Principal Mu Renxu of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Yinqiu's close aide!"

Upon reaching Saint realm, one's physical body would gain extraordinary resilience, so it would not decompose as easily. As such, even though it had been quite some time since Mu Renxu's death, his body still looked no different from how it was when he was alive.

"Vice Principal Mu Renxu?" Zhang Xuan asked as he walked over.

He had read about the other party through the records stored in the academy.

On top of the principal, Zhang Yinqiu, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had four other vice principals. However, all of them had followed Zhang Yinqiu into the ancient domain and never returned. It was also for this reason that Lu Feng was able to serve as the stand-in principal for the past two years.

Mu Renxu was known to be the strongest among the four vice principals. Who would have thought that he would lose his life here?

After searching the area for a while and not finding Zhang Yinqiu's body, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He had never met the old principal before, but there was a painting of the latter in the academy records, and none of the dozens of corpses fit the description.

"There are the corpses of 13 master teachers and 21 Otherworldly Demons here!" Wu shi said with a sigh after tallying the numbers.

All thirteen of them were 6-star master teachers, but they had ended up dying silently in the ancient domain. This was a huge loss to both the Master Teacher Academy and the Master Teacher Pavilion.

"The fight must have been intense," Zhang Xuan remarked solemnly.

He could not help but recall the tombstone that Zhang Yinqiu had left for himself in the Mausoleum of Principals.

Those who came with him would have surely known the great dangers of venturing

into the ancient domain as well, but they had still chosen to join the expedition anyway. Their selflessness was truly worthy of respect.

"Let's take them back with us. They might have been unable to return to the Master Teacher Academy when they were still alive, but at the very least, they should be granted a peaceful rest within the academy after death." Waving his hand, Zhang Xuan carefully placed the corpses of the master teachers within his storage ring.

After what they had done for mankind, their corpses could not be left exposed in the open. The least he could do for them was bring them back home and give them a proper burial.

After Zhang Xuan was done collecting the bodies of the fallen master teachers, Guild Leader Han looked around his surroundings and asked, "But why would they be fighting here? And where did the rest of them go?"

"I am not too sure, but my guess is that Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu must have found out that the Otherworldly Demons were planning to enter the ancient domain, so he swiftly gathered an expedition team and entered the ancient domain as well. Eventually, they ended up encountering one another here, and a bitter fight ensued," Zhang Xuan said.

Based on the words left behind by Zhang Yinqiu in the Mausoleum of Principals, he had only chosen to enter the ancient domain because there were no alternatives before him.

From this, it could be deduced that the Otherworldly Demons must have learned of the ancient domain in advance, and Zhang Yinqiu was trying to stop them.

Of course, that was still only a deduction on Zhang Xuan's part. They would have to hear the story from the person in question in order to confirm what had happened back then.

"Everyone, come here..."

At that moment, a master teacher suddenly shouted. Everyone quickly turned their gazes over, only to see the master teacher examining a massive boulder in the square with a perplexed look.

The master teacher was one of the elders from the Qingzhu Master Teacher Academy.

His combat ability was so-so within the expedition team, but he was an extremely meticulous person.

The crowd quickly walked over to the boulder, and after taking a closer look, frowns emerged on their faces as well.

There was a palm print on it. It was hard to tell whether it was left behind in the midst of the fight or by the creator of the ancient domain.

"That is the switch to trigger a mechanism in the area. I saw a similar one in the Unbounded World," Zhang Xuan remarked.

Back when he was in the Unbounded World, he had seen something similar. Rather than a palm print, it was probably more exact to call it a groove. As long as one put their palm on it and infused zhenqi into the groove, it would trigger some kind of mechanism in the surroundings.

Most likely, it had been left behind by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu.

"A switch?" Wu shi examined it carefully before nodding. "Stand back, I'll give it a try..."

There was no saying what could happen once the switch was triggered, so it was best to take caution.

Everyone quickly stepped back as they prepared their defenses.

With a grim expression, Wu shi placed his palm onto the groove.

Weng!

A buzzing sound echoed, and the wall ahead of them abruptly burst open, revealing nine identical round doors, each around the height of a human. Within each round door was an aura vaguely resembling what they had felt before stepping into the Unbounded World—folded spaces.

Seeing that there was no danger, the crowd slowly walked up to the doors with bewildered expressions.

"There are so many choices?"

"Nine is the limit of a number. The nine doors probably represent the extremities," Guild Leader Han explained.

The crowd nodded.

Nine, the limit of a number, as well as the number derived from the Six Yin-Yang Three-Three Derivation.

In this world, there were many things in nature that were nonet. For example, Fighter 9-dan, Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, Saint 9-dan.

Nine heavens, nine provinces, nine trials, nine realms, nine dragons, nine bestowments...

"Nine doors, that is probably just like the formation. There is life and death, panorama and fright. Which one should we choose?" a combat master asked. 1

"This..." Having no answer to the question, Guild Leader Han subconsciously turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan.

Chapter 1068

The Ancient Sage Appears

Every formation was bound to have at least eight doors: the Origin Gate, Hibernation Gate, Life Gate, Impair Gate, Panorama Gate, Death Gate, Closed Gate, and Fright Gate.

Depending on which gate one encountered, one would face a different fate. Perhaps it would be life, perhaps it would be death, perhaps it would be escape, perhaps it would be eternal incarceration.

One wrong move could mean the end.

It was due to this that few dared to move recklessly within a formation. Otherwise, one wrong step and they would face confinement or even death!

At this moment, there were nine doors before them. It wasn't completely aligned with the Eight Gates, but it was sure to be bound by the same rules. Thus, they dared not enter any of them recklessly.

Noting Guild Leader Han's actions, the others also turned their gazes toward the young man as well.

Seeing that all eyes were gathered on him, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

Those before him were all esteemed master teachers and formation masters, existences who were deeply feared and respected. Yet, all of a sudden, in this trip to the ancient domain, they seemed to have suddenly lost their backbones and ended up relying entirely on him.

Every time they were stuck in a dilemma, they would end up turning to him for instructions.

He wasn't omniscient, alright? He didn't have the answer to every single question in the world.

There were things that he was incapable of as well.

Seeing through Zhang Xuan's thoughts, Guild Leader Han said with a smile, "Principal Zhang, in the journey, you have displayed an understanding of formations and an eye of discernment far superior to ours. We trust you, and we will enter any door that you point out!"

"Indeed, we trust you!"

"We don't have much of an understanding of formations, so we are completely helpless before this. You are probably the only one who can lead us into the correct door!"

...

Everyone began speaking up.

Seeing their attitude, Zhang Xuan knew that he would be unable to turn the matter down, so he eventually relented with a nod. "I will give it a try!"

After saying those words, he activated his Eye of Insight and began observing the doors carefully.

From experience, he knew that the Library of Heaven's Path would only reflect the composition and structure of the doors instead of informing him whether it was safe inside or not. In such situations, it would be better for him to rely on his Eye of Insight.

"Hmm?"

After taking a look around him, his gaze soon stopped before a door. He lowered his head to take a closer look at the ground before the door.

Perplexed, the crowd rushed over and saw a smear of blood on the ground. As too much time had passed, it had already dried up, so it was not overly conspicuous.

Wu shi frowned. "It seems someone left it behind intentionally."

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

The bloodstain had not been left behind by blood dripping from someone's wound. Instead, someone had intentionally left a mark here so as to serve as a hint to those coming afterward.

Frowning deeply, Zhang Xuan continued staring intently at the bloodstain.

As lines of insight swam within his eyes, a scene of when the bloodstain first appeared seemed to vaguely reconstruct before his eyes.

Zhang Xuan stood up and said, "This bloodstain was left by Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu. This is the door that he entered!"

"Let's enter this door then!" Guild Leader Han said.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Their main goal at hand was to find Zhang Yinqiu and the remaining survivors. Since the latter had chosen to enter this door, it went without saying that this was the door they should head into as well.

Furthermore, one thing to note was that while they had encountered so many life-threatening dangers on their journey through the ancient domain, such that their expedition team could have been easily wiped out in any phase, the old principal's team seemed to have breezed through the trials without facing much trouble despite the relatively lower average cultivation of his team. Most likely, he must have known about the secrets of the ancient domain beforehand. Thus, following in his footsteps should lead them to safety.

"Alright!"

Wu shi began leading the way forward, and the crowd followed closely behind him.

As soon as they stepped through the door, the scenery before them immediately changed. A small garden filled with a field of resplendent flowers appeared before their eyes. A slight fragrance drifted in the air.

Everyone was taken aback.

They had thought of many possibilities before stepping through the door. Perhaps they might meet grave danger. Perhaps they might find themselves forced to face some kind of incredibly difficult trial. But one thing they had not thought was that they would end up walking into a seemingly ordinary flower garden.

"Look..."

A combat master pointed toward the center of the flower garden. A massive sculpture of an old man dressed in a master teacher robe towered there.

Forged out of some kind of unique material, the sculpture was extremely lifelike, giving one the feeling as if it would start moving at any moment.

"It's Ancient Sage Qiu Wu..." Upon seeing the other party's appearance, Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched.

It was the old man who had wanted to take him in as his student!

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu?"

Upon seeing the sculpture, the eyes of Feng Xun and the others immediately lit up. They hurriedly rushed forward and kowtowed deeply to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu in reverence.

This was the man whose seals had brought several dozen millennia of peace to mankind. Most definitely, he was a man who was worth their respect.

Wu shi and the others also quickly bowed down as well.

Seeing how earnestly the others were paying respects to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, Zhang Xuan could not help but feel a little awkward.

It was not too long ago that he had offered to take the other party in as his student. If the group over were to learn of this matter, would they pummel him to death?

Boom!

All of a sudden, the ground began shaking, and the sculpture wobbled along with it. A bright glint flashed in the eyes of sculpture.

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was coming to life!

Upon seeing this sight, Wu shi, Feng Xun, and the others were startled. They quickly lowered their bodies fearfully.

Zhang Xuan was initially taken aback by the situation as well, but after taking a closer look, he heaved sigh of relief. It's not Ancient Sage Qiu Wu coming back to life. There's

a will infused within the sculpture.

The current situation was similar to how Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul first appeared in the Unbounded World. There was the same authoritative aura and immense pressure that he felt from before. It was probably a phenomenon that would occur whenever the other party's fragmented soul awakened.

That was to be expected. After all, how could a man who had already died several dozen millenniums ago possibly come back to life?

Most likely, the kneeling crowd must have triggered some kind of mechanism which awoke the will within the sculpture.

Since there was a will hidden within the sculpture, it meant that they had chosen the right door to enter.

Hu!

The sculpture opened its eyes and gazed down upon the kneeling crowd before him, and with an impassive voice, he said, "I am Qiu Wu. You should have already learned that by now."

Just like before, his voice had an ancient quality to it, reminiscent of one who had lived through history.

"Paying respects to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!" Hearing the other party acknowledging his identity, the crowd could not help but tremble in excitement.

That was a figure who had stood as an equal with Kong shi back in that legendary era. He was an ancient sage, one of the most renowned master teachers in the world. Countless viewed him as their idol and role model!

Seeing the respectful attitude of the crowd, the sculpture nodded slightly before continuing. "The fact that you were able to come to this point shows that your mental resilience and judgement are top-notch. I will just skip with all of the pleasantries and conduct a trial to assess your wisdom. I will accept those who are able to clear the trial as my students, and they will be entitled to my heritage. As for those who are unable to clear the trial, I can only have you remain here so as to prevent word from leaking. Is there anyone who wishes to give it a try?"

This Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was the exact same as the one whom Zhang Xuan had encountered in the Unbounded World. Without the slightest dawdling, he revealed his intentions and got straight to the matter at hand.

"A trial to assess our wisdom?"

"Entitled to... elder's heritage?"

Everyone's breathing quickened.

Putting aside how Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's cultivation had already achieved a level beyond Saint 9-dan, just his grasp over space itself was something that most 9-star master teachers couldn't even come close to matching.

If they could receive his heritage, they would surely rise through the ranks, and it would only be a matter of time before they scaled to the peak of the continent.

"Indeed. Talent and mental fortitude allow a cultivator to emulate the successes of the predecessors and achieve the same level of strength as them. However, it is only wisdom that allows one to create that which is unique to them and create their own schools of cultivation. Perhaps... they might even be able to surpass the countless geniuses that came before them. Accept the trial, and you will be granted a chance to join my lineage. Otherwise, turn around and leave my Qiu Wu Palace!" the sculpture said.

"This..."

The crowd did not rush into making a decision. Instead, they looked at one another with grim looks on their faces.

Of course, it would be for the best if they could obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage. However... considering the difficulty of the trials they had been through thus far, the final trial was bound to be something nigh impossible for them to clear.

If they were to fail the trial, they would be trapped in the Qiu Wu Palace, unable to leave.

Succeed, and they would attain power and glory. Fail, and they would be damned.

"Zhang Yinqiu and the others must have decided to take the trial. That should be why

they ended up being trapped within Qiu Wu Palace," Wu shi remarked.

That would explain why the old principal had disappeared for two years.

As one who had managed to become the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, it went without saying that Zhang Yinqiu was a man who possessed great wisdom. On top of that, he also had quite a few vice principals and elders by his side. Every single one of them was an outstanding talent in their own right, but despite two years passing, they were still trapped within Qiu Wu Palace. This was a clear indication of how difficult the trial was.

"But even with the risk of being trapped within the Qiu Wu Palace, I still must undergo the trial. This kind of opportunity is too valuable for me to pass!" Feng Xun said with determination.

"Indeed. For an opportunity to obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage, I am willing to brave through even death itself!" Jiang Yuan and the others nodded in agreement.

Combat masters were trained to charge through all adversity with a relentless and fearless attitude. The heritage of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was a treasure that countless master teachers dreamt of laying their hands on. If they failed the trial, they only had their own weakness to blame.

"I will participate in the trial!"

"Me too!"

...

Wu shi, Mu shi, Wo Tianqiong, and the others nodded affirmatively as well.

As master teachers, how could they give up on an opportunity to obtain the heritage of the venerated Ancient Sage Qiu Wu?

It was not just about the cultivation technique, but their pride and honor as well.

"Wait a moment, something is not right here. I can understand why the old principal would have been trapped within Qiu Wu Palace for failing the trial, but why would the Skyleaf King be trapped within too? Are Otherworldly Demons allowed to undertake the trial as well?"

While the others were making their decisions, at the very back of the crowd, Zhang Xuan abruptly spoke up with a deep frown.

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage was greatly tempting to him, but it wouldn't really be a huge loss even if he didn't obtain it.

For one, he had seen the other party's Unbounded Voyager, and while it was indeed strong, it had plenty of flaws as well. To risk his future over a flawed secret art... it just was not worth it!

After all, the most urgent thing for him at the moment was to become a 9-star master teacher before thirty. Otherwise, the only thing that would be awaiting him was death!

As such, he did not spare much thought to whether he should undertake the trial or not. Instead, he found himself wondering a very different issue instead—if Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu was truly trapped within the Qiu Wu Palace, why would the Skyleaf King be trapped as well?

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had constructed many seals in his lifetime to seal the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe out of the Master Teacher Continent, and eventually, he had even lost his life in the midst of battling them. Through this, one could easily sense the hostility that he harbored toward the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. With his sculpture and fragmented soul standing guard here, how could the Otherworldly Demons possibly be given a chance to undertake the trial and claim his heritage for themselves?

"Could it be that... this fellow is a fake?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

There was a total of nine doors outside, and each of them probably led to a different outcome. For this fellow to suddenly appear and claim that he would be passing down his heritage to them... Wasn't it a little too easy and convenient?

Zhang Xuan could not help but be deeply skeptical of the situation before him.

The sculpture spoke once more. "Most of you should have made up your minds by now. Make your decisions!"

"Yes!" Wu shi and the others stood up, and with unwavering resolution in their eyes, they began marching forward.

Of the twenty-two of them remaining, other than Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin, the rest had actually decided to take the trial!

"Wait a moment!" Seeing that they were going to enter, Zhang Xuan bellowed loudly to stop them.

"What's wrong?" Surprised by Zhang Xuan's sudden outburst, Wu shi and the others hurriedly placed a finger to their lips to gesture for him to quieten down.

It was extremely disrespectful to be shouting so loudly before an elder as venerated as Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!

"It's nothing much. I am just deeply perplexed..."

Frowning, Zhang Xuan flicked his finger at the sculpture.

Chapter 1069

Would You Believe Me?

Hu la!

A powerful surge of sword qi burst toward the sculpture with astounding sharpness, severing the air in two. Even Spirit pinnacle artifacts would have been destroyed in the face of that sword qi.

Upon seeing this sight, the bodies of Wu shi and the others jolted, and they nearly fainted on the spot.

That is Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's sculpture, and there is even his consciousness within it.

To make a move against him without any warning beforehand, are you insane?

Alarmed, Wu shi hurriedly rushed forward, and with a slight wave of his hand, he easily dispelled the sword qi. After which, he turned to Zhang Xuan and asked with a deep frown, "Principal Zhang, what are you trying to do?"

"Nothing much. I just think that there is something wrong with this fellow, and I want to test him!" Zhang Xuan replied with a frown.

He did not think that Wu shi would rush back so anxiously to deflect his sword qi.

"Test him?"

Hearing those words, the crowd nearly fell to the ground in fear.

Who was the man standing before them?

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!

A legendary expert who stood as Kong shi's equal, and Zhang Xuan actually wanted to test him?

"Principal Zhang, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu is a respected elder of our Master Teacher Pavilion. It is a deeply insolent act to raise one's hand against him!" Guild Leader Han anxiously sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan.

The hierarchy of seniority was an order that the Master Teacher Continent operated by. Students were not to raise their hands against their own teachers, let alone a venerated elder like Ancient Sage Qiu Wu!

Even if Zhang Xuan wanted to go on an insane streak, he should first have looked at the occasion. If it were made known that he had attacked Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, he could very well become an enemy of all master teachers on the continent!

"This..."

Seeing the anxious looks around him, seemingly tempted to bind him to prevent him from recklessly attempting any more foolishness, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

He knew that Wu Shi was right. His actions were indeed lacking consideration. No matter what, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was one of the strongest master teachers in history, a figure who had once fought alongside Kong Shi.

Even if the other party was a fake, it would still be very reckless of him to make a move against the other party.

However, if he could not force the other party into executing a battle technique, he would be unable to use the Library of Heaven's Path to compile a book on the other party and confirm his identity.

Just as Zhang Xuan was conflicted over what his next course of action should be, the sculpture suddenly turned toward him and frowned.

As Zhang Xuan had been standing at the very back all along, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had not noticed him. However, now that he had a clear glimpse of the other party's appearance, his eyelids immediately began twitching as he let loose an unintentional exclamation. "It's you?"

"You recognize me?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback as well.

The sculpture harrumphed coldly. "A person who listed the flaws in my Unbounded Voyager and spoke such words to me, how could I not recognize you?"

"You possess the memory of what happened in the Unbounded World?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

Doomed... He really made a mistake this time around.

Since the other party was aware of what had happened in the Unbounded World, it could only mean that the fragmented soul before him belonged to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu as well.

Otherwise, he could not possibly have known about the Unbounded Voyager.

Did he really guess wrongly?

"I am able to access the memories of my fragmented soul in the Unbounded World. He could have survived for at least two more days, but with mere words, you actually managed to discompose his psyche, causing him to dissipate on the spot. Are those in the current generation really that formidable?" the sculpture replied.

The fragmented soul deposited in the Unbounded World only served one aim—to find a fitting successor, take them in as his student, and impart the Unbounded Voyager to them. Eventually, the fragmented soul did manage to find a fitting successor, but not only was the other party unwilling to become his student, the other party even scorned the Unbounded Voyager for having too many flaws.

What was even worse was that the other party even attempted to take him in as his student. Having suffered this series of blows, it was no wonder his fragmented soul dissipated!

"Discompose his psyche?"

"Principal Zhang... has met Ancient Sage Qiu Wu before?"

Hearing the conversation between the two of them, the crowd glanced at one another with confusion in their eyes.

Just what in the world did Principal Zhang say that discomposed the psyche of even the great ancient sage from the same era as Kong shi, causing his fragmented soul to dissipate on the spot?

"Those words slipped out of my lips unintentionally. Allow me to earnestly apologize

to elder right here." With a reddened face, Zhang Xuan hurriedly clasped his fist.

He had only said those words to change the topic back then. He had not really thought that it would end up like that.

"There's no need for you to apologize, what you said is true. The Unbounded Voyager is an advanced movement technique, but it isn't perfect. Back then, Kong shi also said the exact same words to me," the sculpture replied without the slightest hint of anger.

Even though the cultivation of the young man before him was not too high, his eye of discernment was truly extraordinary. Despite having lived so many years, the young man was the second person who had managed to point out all of the flaws in his Unbounded Voyager in a single breath.

"The duration that I can remain conscious for is limited. If you wish to obtain my heritage, move on. You might command a deep understanding of movement techniques, but I have created my own unique school in the field of spatial manipulation. It won't be easy for you to comprehend it," the sculpture remarked confidently.

In the field of spatial manipulation, not even Kong shi was close to a match for him. It was no exaggeration to say that he was the number one expert in the field back in his era.

Thus, he had absolute confident that he would not be bested in this field.

The fact that the young man before him was able to see through the flaws in the Unbounded Voyager in a single glance showed that he possessed a deep aptitude in battle techniques. However, it would not be easy for him to achieve the same success in the field of spatial manipulation.

There was no such thing as a perfect human being who was knowledgeable about everything.

After all, there was only one Kong shi.

"Understood. Elder, I have a doubt in my mind, and I hope that you will be able to enlighten me," Zhang Xuan said with a nod.

"Speak!"

Thinking that it would be improper for him to ask Ancient Sage Qiu Wu directly whether he had allowed an Otherworldly Demon to take the trial—after all, that would be equivalent to questioning the latter's loyalty—Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before speaking.

"A senior of mine entered the ancient domain around two years ago, and there should be a powerful Otherworldly Demon pursuing them from behind. Based on what we know thus far, it seems like they are trapped in Qiu Wu Palace, unable to escape. May I ask if they managed to clear your trial?"

"There was indeed a group who arrived at my Qiu Wu Palace two years ago, and there were some Otherworldly Demons among them as well. However, they didn't choose this door," the sculpture replied.

"They didn't choose this door?" Zhang Xuan had not expected to hear this response.

That did not make sense. Since the old principal had marked this door, this should have been the door he entered as well. Why would he not have entered this door?

"Indeed. They took a detour around the nine doors and advanced straight ahead, so they are currently trapped within the Saint Ascension Hall," the sculpture replied.

"Saint Ascension Hall?" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin glanced at one another, and they could see the bewilderment in each other's eyes.

In the first place, the ancient domain was not located too far away from the Saint Ascension Platform, and for there to be a Saint Ascension Hall within here as well... Could there really be a connection?

"Un." The sculpture nodded. "That is a gift that Kong shi left for the later generations. Of course, if you wish to head there, you have to clear my trial first. Otherwise, if you head straight there like they did, you will only be trapped like the rest of them, unable to leave for all eternity!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

If the old principal had headed straight to the Saint Ascension Hall, why did he leave a mark before this door?

The more he contemplated over the matter, the more perplexed he felt

The sculpture looked at Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin and said, "Now that I have answered your question, it's time for you to make your decision, too. My trial won't be easy, but the rest of them still decided to challenge it. What about you two?"

They were the only ones who had not expressed their decision yet.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said, "I... wish to undertake the trial!"

Since he had already confirmed that Zhang Yinqiu and the others were currently in the Saint Ascension Hall, he would have to clear the trial in order to get to them. Otherwise, if they were to head there in through the same route that Zhang Yinqiu and the others took previously, they would only end up being trapped in there as well.

Besides, it would be a delight to obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage.

Take the Unbounded Voyager for example, while it had plenty of flaws at the moment, once he found sufficient high-tier movement techniques to compile together with it and perfect it, the prowess it harnessed would be frightening. Once that happened, Zhang Xuan's fighting prowess would be raised by leaps and bounds in a single breath. Just by mastering the Unbounded Voyager 1-dan, he would be able to easily escape even from the real Skyleaf King.

He would not be as powerless as he was before.

Luo Ruoxin shook her head. "I won't be entering."

"You aren't going to enter?" Zhang Xuan was startled. He did not think that Luo Ruoxin would make such a decision.

"Un. I have my own heritage. Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage is great, but it's not compatible with me. Instead of wasting my effort inside, I think I will just wait outside for all of you," Luo Ruoxin explained with a smile.

"I see... Alright then." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Luo Ruoxin was right. Those who possessed unique constitutions or bloodlines could often only practice specific types of cultivation techniques and battle techniques. Take Zhao Ya for example, before meeting Zhang Xuan, she had practiced the White Jade Pure Maiden Skill, which was deeply incompatible with her Pure Yin Body. As a result, not only did her cultivation stagnate, it had even resulted in great suffering for her.

"Don't worry about me, you should go ahead with the trial. Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage is very valuable. It will definitely be beneficial to you if you can learn it!" Luo Ruoxin said.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "I'll go in and take a look. Don't worry, I'll surely clear the trial!"

He had no idea what the trial would be on, but he had absolute confidence that he would be able to clear it.

Hearing those words, Luo Ruoxin nodded with a smile. "Good luck."

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan began walking toward the door behind the sculpture along with Wu shi and the others.

Hu!

In just a few moments, they disappeared from sight.

...

A moment later, Zhang Xuan and the others found themselves standing within a courtyard, and a row of stone tablets stood before them.

There were around twenty of them in total, and they formed a circle around the crowd. Each of them was densely inscribed with all kinds of characters.

Knowing that they were already within the trial, Wu shi, Feng Xun, and the others dared not dawdle. They quickly rushed forward to examine the stone tablets.

A quick sweep of the tablets left each of them with bizarre expressions on their faces. It was not that they were unable to learn whatever was on top of the stone tablets, but that... they could not even understand it.

The inscriptions on the stone tablets consisted of words from many different languages. There was the language that they used, the Ancient Beast Language, and even the words of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. Dozens of languages were inscribed side by side one another on the stone tablets, making it nigh impossible for one to decipher it.

"Near, qing, hua, sheng, break, ming, xiao... This... How are we supposed to comprehend this?"

Wu shi happened to know quite a few languages and could read some of the inscriptions, but the words did not string together to construct a proper sentence, and this left him completely bewildered. He had no idea how he was supposed to interpret the inscriptions.

Perplexed, he turned his gaze toward the others, only to see Feng Xun, Wo Tianqiong, and the others with equally confused expressions on their faces.

He shot a glance at Zhang Xuan and saw that the latter had a baffled look as well.

They thought that the trial to assess their wisdom would require them to learn a particularly profound cultivation technique, as such events trials usually went, but... they could not even read the stone tablets! How were they supposed to clear the trial?

They had already guessed that a trial from Ancient Sage Qiu Wu would be anything but easy, but who knew that it would be so bewildering?

Wu shi continued examining the stone tablets before him, but nothing came to him. Unable to stand it anymore, he headed over to Zhang Xuan and asked, "Principal Zhang, have you discovered anything yet?"

If any of them was capable of comprehending the secrets behind the stone tablet, it could only be the young man before him.

"Not yet..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

To be honest, he was also at a complete loss as well.

Recalling the conversation between Ancient Sage Qiu Wu and Zhang Xuan earlier, Wu shi couldn't help but ask, "Didn't Ancient Sage Qiu Wu praise you earlier for your deep understanding of battle techniques? Since you were able to comprehend his other battle technique, this shouldn't be too much trouble for you, right?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly. "I only happened to successfully decipher his movement technique, but this... I really have no idea what's going on."

At this point, Feng Xun walked up to them and said, "It's already a formidable feat for

you to have been able to decipher his movement technique, so you don't have to feel dismayed. Right, Principal Zhang, what did you speak to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu about for him to remember you so clearly?"

Hearing that question, everyone quickly turned their gazes over as well.

In truth, this was also a matter that they had been very curious about.

Words that could make a fragmented soul of an ancient sage who had lived for several dozen millenniums lose his composure and dissipate... Just what could they be?

Seeing that everyone was looking at him with eyes gleaming with curiosity, Zhang Xuan scratched his head in embarrassment and said, "If I were to say that I tried to take Ancient Sage Qiu Wu as my student... would any of you believe me?"

Chapter 1070

Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm

"Accept Ancient Sage Qiu Wu as your disciple?"

The lips of Wu shi and the others twitched for a moment first before they quickly shook their heads.

They didn't think that Zhang Xuan was being serious. They felt that it was inconceivable that anyone would dare speak words like that.

After all, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was an expert that stood beside Kong shi in that chaotic era. Even the current head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, a true 9-star master teacher, would have to respectfully address him as 'elder', not daring to show the slightest discourtesy towards him.

Yet, Zhang Xuan actually said that he attempted to accept the other party as his student?

If he were to really dare to utter such words, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu would probably have him killed in a single slap.

Through everyone's expression, Zhang Xuan could tell that they didn't believe him. He knew that this would happen.

Nevertheless, he couldn't be bothered to explain either. It was his intention to keep a low profile anyway, so this was for the best.

"Let's continue examining the stone tablets. Since this is part of a trial, there's bound to be a solution to it." Not wanting to dwell on that topic, Zhang Xuan waved his hand as he turned his attention back to the stone tablets before him.

Through his Eye of Insight, he could tell that there was nothing special about the material of the stone tablets before him. They were just ordinary boulders, and the only exceptional quality about them was just their durability.

In other words, the crux to the stone tablet had to be the inscriptions on it.

Just that... there were simply too many languages on the stone tablets! Furthermore, even if they managed to translate it, they didn't form proper sentences, making it impossible to figure what they meant.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and placed his hand on the stone tablet.

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Zhang Xuan swiftly flipped it open.

"Ashened Stone Tablet, inscribed by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. It contains the complete formula to cultivating the [Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm]. There are 27 flaws regarding the inscribed battle technique: No.1, the effectiveness of the battle technique is highly dependent on the state of mind the cultivator is in. As such, the cultivator will have to ready his emotional state before the battle, or else he will be unable to display the full prowess of the technique. This makes it highly ineffective in abrupt situations. No.2, it has a high requirement of one's zhenqi..."

Detailed on the book were the many flaws of the battle technique.

"As expected, it is a battle technique!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

It seemed like Ancient Sage Qiu Wu wasn't lying to them. The stone tablets were indeed a kind of trial.

Soon, after he was done reading the book, Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

He did get the name of the battle technique, and he had a thorough understanding of its flaws as well, but... he still couldn't understand the battle technique manual!

Knowing the flaws but not the technique itself was like having a remedy in hand but not knowing what illness it applied to... It did nothing to help the situation that they were in!

He had to think of a way to understand the words on the stone tablet so that he could obtain the battle technique.

Thus, retracting his consciousness from the Library of Heaven's Path, he continued examining the stone tablets before him intently.

The same seemingly meaningless combination of characters came into sight, leaving his eyes hurting a little. Those words just simply didn't form something coherent together!

"Wait... Even though I am unable to understand the words on the stone tablet, perhaps I might be able to translate it through compiling it together with other books..." Suddenly, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up as a thought came into his mind.

If he were to go about it the normal method, it was likely that he would first have to translate the many different languages on the stone tablets into a single language first. However, just that step in itself would likely take up a significant period of time.

Furthermore, given that it was a trial of wisdom, it definitely wouldn't be as simple as simply translating the words. There were bound to be many stumbling blocks waiting ahead of him.

Instead of going through the trouble, wouldn't it be much simpler if he could just compile the other palm art manuals with it?

With this thought in mind, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and asked, "Do you have any palm art manuals in your possession? Can you allow me to take a look at them?"

"Palm art manuals?"

The crowd was perplexed by Zhang Xuan's sudden request, unsure of what he was up to.

The urgent matter at hand was to figure out what the trial was through deciphering the stone tablets which Ancient Sage Qiu Wu left behind. Why was the other party asking for palm art manuals all of the sudden?

"I have quite a few here with me. I copied them from the Palm Hall of our Combat Master Hall branch just a while ago!" Jiang Yuan said as he flicked his wrist, and a stack of over several hundred books appeared before his eyes.

While he was perplexed by what Zhang Xuan was up to, he knew that the latter wasn't one to make a request for no reason.

As the warriors of the Master Teacher Pavilion, combat masters devoted much of their time to studying all kinds of battle techniques. As such, every single one of them had a huge collection of battle techniques in their storage rings.

"I have some over here too!" Feng Xun flicked his wrist and took out a bunch too.

Before long, the combat masters had already whipped out more than three thousand palm art manuals.

"I don't have as many palm art manuals as they do, but mine are of relatively higher tier..."

With a smile, Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han took out roughly a dozen books combined.

Most of the palm arts detailed in the dozen books had already reached Saint low-tier, making them exceptionally valuable. Nevertheless, since Zhang Xuan said that he needed it, they took it out without any hesitation.

"Thank you..." Zhang Xuan nodded as he quickly collected those books into the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Compile!" Zhang Xuan muttered softly.

Hu!

Countless books flew together and merged together with the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm's manual.

Huala!

A brand new book appeared before Zhang Xuan's eyes.

He reached forward to grab it before swiftly flipping it open.

"As expected, quite a few flaws of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm have been resolved..." Sweeping through the contents, Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

Just like what he had guessed earlier, the compilation of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm manual with the other several ten thousand palm art manuals he had in

the Library of Heaven's Path had the number of flaws successfully reduced from the initial 27 to just 9.

Considering that the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm was an extremely advanced palm art, it was inevitable that the books he had collected thus far wouldn't be sufficient to perfect it. In truth, it was already a huge blessing that they were able to resolve 18 of the flaws.

"Let me see if I can cultivate it..."

Zhang Xuan took a quick look through the newly compiled manual, and eventually, he shook his head in disappointment.

Even though it was very close to being a Heaven's Path battle technique with only nine flaws remaining, some parts of it were still gibberish.

To be more exact, the portions which had been corrected by the compilation of the other books were readable, there was no problem interpreting them, but the flawed portions still remained the jumbled mess of languages they were.

"Let me compare the readable portions with the stone tablet and see if I can decipher it..."

Memorizing the parts which had been translated perfectly, Zhang Xuan began examining the corresponding portions of the text on the stone tablets, only to realize that he was as confused as before. It was as if the two were completely unrelated to one another!

Somehow, he felt like a student who had the model answer in hand but was still unable to comprehend the question.

After studying the stone tablets for a while longer, Zhang Xuan mumbled with a conflicted expression, "These words don't seem to have anything to do with battle techniques..."

All along, he had been able to find the flaws of any battle technique easily through the Library of Heaven's Path and shock others. Yet, despite having the model answer in hand, he still couldn't understand what was on the stone tablet at all... it was extremely frustrating.

"It has already been four hours now... Should I just use the eighteen resolved flaws to see if I can clear the trial with just that?" Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella as he thought.

Typically speaking, the requirement for clearing the trial was for him to learn the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, but there was nothing he could do if the stone tablets made perfectly no sense to him... Perhaps, if he were to submit the eighteen resolved flaws, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu might not think too much into the matter and clear him for the trial?

With this thought in mind, Zhang Xuan stood up to call for Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, but in that moment, he caught sight of a certain inscription by the corner of a stone tablet in his peripheral vision.

These inscriptions were made up of the language of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. They made no sense when read as a whole, but in the moment which Zhang Xuan stood up, the inscriptions seemed to have danced slightly.

It was a similar feeling to what he felt from the inscriptions carved by the Greenleaf King's subordinates back in the Subterranean Gallery.

"Could it be that... we aren't supposed to regard these inscriptions as words but figures instead?"

Suddenly, such a thought came into Zhang Xuan's mind.

If the inscriptions were truly just words, he should have been able to decipher them by matching the translated content in his Library of Heaven's Path with the stone tablets, but that didn't work out. However, if they were figures, it would all make sense!

With a sharp glint in his eyes, Zhang Xuan began examining the stone tablets before him closely once more.

This time, with his focus on the form of each inscribed word, they suddenly seemed to float out of the stone tablet before his eyes and string together as one.

Taking a closer look, he realized in astonishment that it was drawing out a zhenqi circulation pathway.

"Let me try cultivating it..."

After gaining a thorough understanding of the various zhenqi circulation pathways of the battle technique, Zhang Xuan began driving his zhenqi through his body in the same manner reflected on the stone tablets.

Geji! Geji!

With the overwhelming might of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, the acupoints along the zhenqi circulation pathway were opened instantaneously. Whenever Zhang Xuan encountered flawed sections of the technique, he would utilize the correct version which he had compiled in the Library of Heaven's Path previously instead.

Cracking sounds echoed relentlessly from Zhang Xuan's body.

"So this is how the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm should be cultivated..."

Soon, after driving his zhenqi a circulation through his body, he had finally managed to master the palm art.

As there were too many flaws in the palm art, Zhang Xuan ended up being unable to compile it into a Heaven's Path battle technique, leaving it only at Saint intermediate-tier.

Nevertheless, it was still an advanced battle technique that was far beyond the means of ordinary Nascent Saints to cultivate. In fact, it would be difficult for even Saint 4-dan experts to grasp the technique.

However, Zhang Xuan was an exception as he had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher previously. The zhenqi which he harnessed within his body was boundless like the vast ocean, granting his sufficient energy to execute the technique. At the same time, the exceptionally pure Heaven's Path zhenqi was able to reach and open up even the smallest meridians within his body. As such, he actually succeeded in cultivating the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm to Minor Accomplishment!

The cultivation of battle techniques could be divided into Novice, Initiate, Minor Accomplishment, Major Accomplishment, and Consummation.

"With so many flaws remaining in the palm art, it'll suffice for me to cultivate it to Minor Accomplishment. I should find an opportunity to head to the Palm Hall of the Combat Master Hall to find more books to perfect the technique into a Heaven's Path Palm Art before cultivating it further..."

Stretching his back lazily, Zhang Xuan stood up.

There were simply far too many flaws in the palm art. It was fortunate that the flaws had only weakened the might of the palm art and increased the depletion of zhenqi required in its execution instead of inflicting permanent harm on his body like the Unbounded Voyager. Otherwise, he would have never cultivated it.

"It's really too crude..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

This must have been the most flawed battle technique that he had practiced ever since he started cultivating. He couldn't help but shake his head at this great embarrassment.

"Principal Zhang, how is it?"

Noting that Zhang Xuan seemed to have dawned on something, Wu shi and the others hurriedly turned their gazes towards him.

After studying the stone tablets for some time, they had succeeded in translating quite a few portions of the stone tablets and gathered some insights of their own. However, the stone tablets still remained as much of an enigma to them as before.

"The battle technique contained within the stone tablet is a palm art. I have managed to decipher and grasp it..." Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

"A palm art?"

"You managed to grasp it?"

Everyone was stunned.

While all they could see were a bunch of jumbled up words, the young man before them had already managed to decipher the text and even successfully grasp it... Wasn't his wisdom a little too earth-shattering!

"A palm art? You have managed to decipher and grasp it?"

Hong long!

Zhang Xuan was just about to speak when the ground suddenly rumbled deafeningly.

Taking a look, he saw that Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's sculpture had leaped into the courtyard and was currently staring at him with a perplexed look in his eyes.

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu knew how difficult the trial he had left behind was. Even the most talented of his students required at least several months in order to decipher the secret behind the stone tablets. Yet, the young man actually managed to grasp the palm art he had left behind in less than six hours?

Was it really possible for a human to have such high wisdom?

Chapter 1071

Crossing Palms

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "If I am not mistaken, the name of your palm art is Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm!"

The sculpture widened his eyes in astonishment. "You... know the name of the palm art?"

He had only recorded the zhenqi circulation pathway of the palm art in the form of figures on the stone tablets; nowhere on the stone tablets was the name of the palm art stated. Just where in the world did that fellow learn of the name?

"This..." Zhang Xuan was stunned for a moment before his eyebrows shot up.

It suddenly dawned on him as well that the name of the palm art was not stated anywhere on the stone tablets. Even though he had practiced the battle technique, he would only know that it was a palm art and not what palm art it was.

"Elder, I happen to have read some of your records and learned that you have a powerful palm art named Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, which has been lost with time. While practicing the palm art recorded on the stone tablets, I realized that it is very similar to the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, so I deduced that this palm art might be it," Zhang Xuan replied.

One thing was for sure, he could not reveal the details concerning the Library of Heaven's Path. Whether the other party believed him or not, that was not his concern anyway.

The sculpture was stunned. "You have read some of my records?"

You did not seem to have read my records when I tried to take you in as my student back in the Unbounded World though...

Nevertheless, he knew that there was no point pursuing this matter. Thus, the sculpture turned to Zhang Xuan once more and asked, "You said that you not only

deciphered the palm art, you have even grasped it as well, correct?"

"Yes!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The sculpture shook his head. "You would have cleared the trial just by deciphering the palm art. But to practice it as well... Reckless, you are really too reckless!"

He was the one who had created the palm art, so he knew full well how difficult it was to practice the technique.

Even the strongest among their expedition group, the Saint 4-dan pinnacle master teacher, would not have sufficient zhenqi to practice the technique. For a Nascent Saint to try it out... wasn't he just asking for trouble?

"This fist art has reached Saint intermediate-tier, and it would be difficult for even Saint 5-dan experts to master the technique. Those whose cultivation don't meet the mark will only injure themselves by practicing it. Back when I first created the technique, it took an entire year and three months just to achieve Novice mastery, three years to reach Initiate, and Minor Accomplishment... nearly eight years! Of my disciples, even the most talented of them took forty years in order to reach Minor Accomplishment!" the sculpture said as he reminisced about the past.

It had not been easy even for him, the creator of the fist art, to master it. Just reaching Minor Accomplishment had taken him twelve whole years.

His students had fared much worse than him, such that they were not even worth mentioning.

Just from that alone, it could be seen how difficult it was to learn the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm.

"You must have given up after realizing that it will be extremely difficult for you to grasp the technique with your current cultivation, right? That's the right way to go. Without my guidance, there is a good chance that you might end up cultivating it incorrectly, and that could lead to disastrous consequences..."

Before he could finish his words, the young man before him scratched his head in embarrassment and said, "While practicing the technique earlier... I think that I accidentally reached Minor Accomplishment."

"You accidentally reached Minor Accomplishment?" The sculpture shook wildly, and it nearly burst apart on the spot.

It was just a moment ago that he said that he, despite being the creator of the palm art, took twelve years to reach Minor Accomplishment. How long had it been since the young man before him started practicing it?

Even assuming that the other party had deciphered the stone tablets as soon as he arrived, he would still only have had around six hours to practice the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Art...

And yet, Minor Accomplishment?

Was he for real?

"Indeed. To be honest with you, your Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm is indeed very strong, but it's a pity that it simply has too many flaws." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply. "It's really distressing for me to practice a technique like this."

"You!" As soon as the sculpture heard those words, he nearly fainted from rage.

Back in the Unbounded World, that fellow directed those words to another one of his soul fragments, and eventually, that fragmented soul ended up losing its composure and dissipated. And now... he was off again!

Just what did I do to offend you?

If it's so distressing for you to practice my technique, why the heck did you cultivate it to Minor Accomplishment?

"You said that you cultivated it to Minor Accomplishment?" Frowning, the sculpture glanced at Zhang Xuan and said, "It is possible for me to gauge if you have learned my palm art correctly and how deep your mastery of it is through the might you exert with it. How about this? I'll suppress my cultivation to Nascent Saint and execute my Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm at Minor Accomplishment mastery, and as long as you can withstand my attack, I will acknowledge that you have indeed grasped the essence of my palm art!"

There was probably no one who could remain calm after having his capabilities doubted by a mere Nascent Saint cultivator multiple times.

It was not the first time that the young man before him had said such words.

Thus, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu decided to teach the other party a lesson so as to make him learn that there was a greater world beyond the world he saw. Otherwise, with such a complacent attitude, the other party would not go far in life, and that would truly be a huge loss to mankind.

"This..." Hearing that the other party intended to cross palms with him, Zhang Xuan was stunned for a moment. "You are able to execute battle techniques despite being a sculpture?"

"Of course! I might only be a sculpture at the moment, but through my fragmented soul, I am still able to easily utilize strength comparable to a Nascent Saint!" the sculpture replied before raising his palm.

An indomitable aura immediately permeated the area, exerting an incredible pressure on all lifeforms standing in the vicinity.

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was already a renowned top-notch expert in the Master Teacher Continent before he joined Kong shi's ranks. He was known to be a peerless existence even among those who had reached the same height in their cultivation as him. Even if Ancient Sage Qiu Wu suppresses his cultivation to Nascent Saint, there's no way Principal Zhang will be able to take his palm!"

"That's a definite. After all, the palm art was created by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, and he has practiced it for innumerable years. On the other hand, Principal Zhang has barely had six hours to grasp the technique. Within such a short period of time, no matter how talented he may be, how much could he possibly have comprehended?"

"Indeed, there is simply too huge a difference between the both of them; Principal Zhang doesn't stand a chance."

...

Upon seeing this sight, Wu shi and the others shook their heads.

In their view, there was no way Zhang Xuan stood a chance against Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. One had barely cultivated the technique for six hours whereas the other had years of experience. Not to mention, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu was one of the strongest experts in the continent. Even with his cultivation suppressed to Nascent Saint as well, it was

impossible for Zhang Xuan to be able to match him.

"This..." Seeing how adamant the other party was on the matter, Zhang Xuan could only relent with a nod. "Alright then."

To be honest, even though he had said that he had practiced the palm art, he had not had an opportunity to execute the technique yet. All he had done was drive his zhenqi through the circulation pathway as stated in the palm art manual. This spar would serve as a good opportunity for him to gauge the strength harnessed within the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Art.

If it was still decently powerful, he could consider using it in future battles.

"Let's begin then!" the sculpture said as he thrust his palm forward with overwhelming momentum.

Boom!

A devastating aura that was reminiscent of innumerable heavenly demons descending upon the lands pervaded the surroundings. It exerted a crushing pressure not only on one's physical body but on one's soul as well.

The prowess of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm did not just lie in its physical might but its ability to assault souls and Primordial Spirit as well.

This was precisely why it was extremely well-known back in the ancient era despite only being a Saint intermediate-tier battle technique.

"How strong..."

"Despite standing such a long distance away... Even though the attack isn't directed toward me, my body still instinctively stiffened in fear, rendering me incapable of retaliating at all!"

"As expected of a battle technique created by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu! If I could master it, my fighting prowess would surely be enhanced by at least twofold!"

"This palm art requires the user to infuse their soul energy into the palm strike as well in order to bring forth the immense might it harnesses. It won't be easy to grasp it."

...

Feeling the might of the palm art, Wu shi and the others found their bodies stiffening uncontrollably, and their faces paled in astonishment and fear.

It was simply too powerful!

To be honest, the sculpture's movements were not fast, and there was not anything particularly profound about it either. Yet, it harnessed a might that left one feeling deeply helpless before it, both physically and mentally.

This was a sensation that none of the battle techniques they had cultivated could ever hope to evoke in their opponents.

Truly terrifying!

"No wonder Ancient Sage Qiu Wu said that the palm art won't be easy to practice, I can now see why. I wonder how deep a mastery Principal Zhang has achieved in the technique," Wu shi said.

The Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm had already transcended the level of being a mere maneuver involving the use of one's palms. In order to execute the technique, one's spirit, psyche, and mind had to be perfectly aligned with one's movements. Without years of training, it would be impossible to pull it off.

As talented as Principal Zhang was, he was simply too young. The experience he could have accrued would inevitably be terribly limited. As such, it was truly unlikely that he would be able to grasp the very essence of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Art.

The reason most cultivators chose to journey through the world to experience the many facets of life, be it joy, anger, sorrow, or envy, was to temper their state of mind, making it more wholesome and resilient. There were also many cultivation techniques and battle techniques that were built upon such experiences, and without personally going through those experiences, it would be difficult for one to grasp its essence.

With such thoughts in mind, Wu shi could not help but turn his gaze toward the young man in question, only to see the young man standing calmly with his hands behind his back, not in a rush to prepare his defense. He glanced at the sky at a forty-five-degree angle. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking about, but unspeakable sorrow was reflected in the depths of his eyes.

Perhaps his lover had left him behind, or maybe his kin or a close friend had passed away before his eyes, but in that moment, he exuded a forlorn aura that felt as if the whole world had abandoned him.

Wu shi narrowed his eyes before exclaiming in shock. "That is... a terpsichorean art?"

It was just a simple posture, but it emanated deep sorrow that spectators could vividly feel with their entire existence. This was no longer just a state of mind but a technique involving the soul as well.

"Terpsichorean art? I thought that terpsichorean arts utilize dance in order to assault one's opponents?" Feng Xun asked in confusion.

In his view, terpsichore was an occupation that put others in a trance through their resplendent clothes and graceful movements. Due to the nature of the occupation, it was usually practiced only by females. How could Principal Zhang be a terpsichore as well?

Not to mention, even if he was a terpsichore, all he was doing was standing still in his plain and unspectacular master teacher robe. How could something like that be considered a terpsichorean art?

"It's true that most terpsichores utilize dance as a medium to launch soul attacks against their opponents. However... it's said that if one achieves a deep mastery in terpsichorean arts, one will be able to put others into a trance even with the simplest of gestures. Even though Principal Zhang isn't moving, I'm certain you can feel your soul resonating with his state of mind..."

At this point, Wu shi raised his finger and pointed. "Look at them..."

Feng Xun turned his gaze over and saw that the combat masters behind him had their emotions deeply moved by Zhang Xuan, and tears were flowing uncontrollably down their faces.

"This..." Feng Xun narrowed his eyes in shock.

He thought that it was already an amazing feat for Zhang Xuan to possess a deep understanding of formations and wield strength comparable to his. Who would have thought that he possessed such fearsome means to deal with the soul as well?

Even though the combat masters behind him only possessed cultivations of Saint 1-dan and Saint 2-dan, they were all experts who were capable of easily rivaling opponents far stronger than them, so it would be a huge mistake to measure them solely based on their cultivation realms. Furthermore, they had also undergone training to temper their souls and fend off soul attacks. Yet, with just a glance, they had all succumbed to Zhang Xuan's terpsichorean art, completely helpless to retaliate.

In that moment, Feng Xun felt his goosebumps rising all over his skin.

"Look, it's starting!"

Amid his shock, Wu Shi suddenly exclaimed loudly, jolting him back from his daze. He hurriedly turned his gaze over and saw Principal Zhang rising his palm lightly to face the sculpture's strike squarely.

His movements could not have been considered fast, and there was nothing elegant or impressive about them either. It resembled nothing but a simple push, and yet, it left the crowd feeling as if they were standing atop a small boat amid a violent storm in the ocean.

In that instant, Zhang Xuan seemed to have morphed into a gigantic heavenly demon, and his presence crushed their souls so tightly that none of them could even gather the slightest courage to stand against him.

"Hmm?"

Noticing the abrupt change in the young man's disposition, the sculpture's initial calm expression turned slightly grave. Frowning deeply, he infused more strength into his palm strike.

Peng!

The two palms finally collided with one another, and an incredible shockwave surged into the surroundings.

Sou!

Before the sculpture could even process what was going on, he was sent flying into a stone tablet and shattered into pieces.

Everyone was dumbfounded.

"This..."

"The same cultivation realm, the same palm strike, and the same level of mastery... and Principal Zhang was still able to defeat Ancient Sage Qiu Wu in a single strike?"

Chapter 1072

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu Dissipates From Shock... Again

None of them had doubted that Principal Zhang was going to be sent flying from Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's palm strike, but the situation ended up being the complete reverse. The expert who had stood beside Kong shi for many years ended up being instantly destroyed instead!

More importantly, the fellow who had instantly destroyed him had done it using his palm art after practicing it for barely six hours!

"How in the world can I ever match up with that monster?" Feng Xun, whose hair had been devastated by the shockwave, was on the verge of tears.

Even though he had lost to Zhang Xuan the previous time around, he had been able to accept his loss calmly because he thought that as long as he cultivated diligently after returning to the Combat Master Hall, he would eventually be able to return the favor and cleanse himself of the humiliation. However, after witnessing the insane might that Zhang Xuan was able to exert on a whim... he should just abandon all hopes of that then and there.

Otherwise, he would only be treading down a path where he would suffer blow after blow until insanity finally consumed him.

"You... Are you sure that you have only reached a mastery of Minor Accomplishment?" Just like the shocked crowd, the sculpture's head rose from its destroyed remains and stared at Zhang Xuan, flabbergasted.

The Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm was a technique that he had created after long years of studying and experimentation, and he thought that no one would be able to top him in it. Yet, he was still sent flying so easily. How could the might wielded by the other party's attack be so much greater than his?

"Un, it is only at Minor Accomplishment!" Zhang Xuan had never used the palm art

before, so he had not thought that it would be so powerful either. If he had known earlier, he would have made sure to hold back so that he did not destroy the other party's body. He could not help but feel a little embarrassed. "There were too many flaws in the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm previously, so I altered it slightly. I really did not think that it would be so powerful. My sincere apologies..."

The sculpture widened his eyes in shock. "Altered? You altered my palm art?"

In just six short hours, not only did that fellow decipher the battle technique he had left behind and practice it to a mastery of Minor Accomplishment, he even... thought that it was too weak and modified it.

Man, you are really heading for the stars!

"Un. Your Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm is a decent palm art indeed, wielding considerable strength. However, it is simply riddled with too many flaws; there are exactly 27 of them! Due to the limitations of my shallow knowledge, I was only able to resolve 18 of them, so there are still 9 remaining, which I can't find a solution to at the moment." Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed deeply.

If he had sufficient palm art manuals at hand, he never would have practiced such a flawed palm art. Just thinking about it was sufficient to leave him deeply frustrated.

Huala!

The sculpture was in the midst of regathering his shattered body when he heard those words, and he shook intensely, nearly shattering once more.

Shallow knowledge... And furthermore, what is with that frustrated look on your face?

Will you die if you stop showing off for a while?

It is a fist art I created, and even I was unable to correct it any further. With just a look, you were able to resolve two-thirds of the remaining flaws, and you call that having shallow knowledge?

If that's considered as shallow, should I just end my life right here and right now?

It is a Saint intermediate-tier battle technique, and you actually feel frustrated from practicing it.

I am the one who should be frustrated!

Due to the intense fluctuations in his state of mind, more and more cracks began appearing on the regathering sculpture.

He had left behind his ancient domain to find himself an outstanding student to pass down his heritage so as to return glory and honor to his lineage. Who would have thought that instead of displaying his awe-inspiring might as an esteemed elder, he ended up suffering blow after blow instead?

Suppressing his vexed emotions, the sculpture asked, "Which 18 flaws did you alter?"

Given that they were at the same cultivation realm using the same palm art with the same level of mastery, the fact that the might harnessed by the other party's palm was far greater than his went to show that the other party had successfully improved his palm art. As the one who had painstakingly created the technique, it was natural that he wanted to know what mistakes his palm art had.

"You wish to know? I can teach you!" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

Kacha!

A huge crack appeared on the sculpture, and Ancient Sage Qiu Wu felt a sharp pain assaulting its chest.

"There's no need for it..." As much as he wanted to know where he had gone wrong, he did not think that he could take it if the other party were to ask him to acknowledge him as his teacher once more.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. It's actually quite simple. The first flaw is that when one's zhenqi is directed toward the Spiritual Sea..." Zhang Xuan began explaining the flaws.

As he did not have sufficient advanced movement arts to fuse together with the Boundless Voyager, he only knew of its flaws and not how they should be resolved. As such, he was unable to respond to the other party's query back then. However, for the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, he already had the solutions for those eighteen flaws, so it was not a big deal for him to recite them to the other party.

Kacha! Kacha!

Hearing those words, more and more cracks appeared on the sculpture. Too overwhelmed with shock, it seemed to be at the limits of its endurance.

Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had only left a sliver of his soul in the ancient domain. Furthermore, with the passing of innumerable years, his fragmented soul had already grown incredibly weak and unstable. As such, after suffering consecutive traumas from Zhang Xuan, he was already nearing the point of dissipation.

It was not that his mental resilience was too weak, but the fellow before him was simply too exaggerated.

To his shock, the 27 flaws listed were also identical to what Kong shi had said back then. Kong shi had not solved them for him back then either, tasking him to find a solution himself. Zhang Xuan's words had truly enlightened him. The flaws of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm were an issue that had plagued his mind for a very long time, and learning the solutions to them had left him feeling as if he would be content even if he were to die at that very instant. His mind inadvertently slackened, and that single lapse in concentration triggered the start of his dissipation.

"...These are the eighteen flaws that I have altered. As for the remaining nine, there's nothing I can do about them at the moment."

Very soon, Zhang Xuan was done reciting the portions of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm that he had corrected. Raising his gaze, he looked at the sculpture once more, and his eyes immediately widened in horror. "Ah! What... happened to you?"

The sculpture, which had been trying its best to regather its body earlier, suddenly collapsed onto the ground as if a slab of mud. Even the previously intact head was completely covered with cracks, reminiscent of a spider web. It looked as if it was on the verge of shattering altogether.

"I see, I see... So, all along, I have been practicing it in the wrong manner. It is no wonder I was unable to reach greater heights despite many years of hard work." Seemingly oblivious to Zhang Xuan's words, the sculpture muttered in a daze beneath his breath, and more and more cracks crept across its head.

After a momentary lamentation, the sculpture raised his gaze and looked at Zhang Xuan. "Thank you for your guidance. Not only did you manage to decipher my palm art, you even altered it to such perfection. You have cleared my trial, and you are

qualified to obtain my heritage. My heritage is... is... is..."

Halfway through his words, however, a loud 'kacha!' sounded.

Huala!

The sculpture's head shattered.

Zhang Xuan was dumbstruck. He hurriedly rushed forward in an attempt to piece the sculpture's head together, but upon contact, the shattered fragments were reduced to dust. The fragmented soul deposited within it had already vanished.

"You haven't said what your heritage is!" Zhang Xuan's body trembled in anxiety as he nearly spewed blood.

Isn't this Ancient Sage Qiu Wu a little too unreliable?

Didn't you say that anyone who cleared your trial will be entitled to your heritage?

So, how can you shatter before revealing what your heritage is? Heck, this is too much!

He was not the only one who was feeling frenzied by the turn of events. Wu shi and the others also had their eyes widened in shock, and they nearly burst out crying.

After going through so much trouble, just when the heritage seemed to be within reach... the will of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu ended up being so heavily traumatized by Principal Zhang that he dissipated on the spot before managing to utter a word about the heritage.

At this moment, they felt as if someone had taken a treasure that was right before their reach and tossed it into the ocean!

What the heck was with that?

Moments earlier, they had still been thinking that it was a good thing that they entered the ancient domain together with Zhang Xuan. His talent, sharp wits, and comprehension of formations were top-notch, and they felt that they would be safe following behind him. If the expedition team were to obtain something good in the ancient domain, they would at least gain a share of it as well.

However, at this moment, it dawned on them that they were gravely mistaken!

Now that even Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul was traumatized to the point of dissipating on the spot, the heritage had disappeared for good. In other words, there was not even a morsel left for them anymore!

"This... Perhaps his time was up, so the sculpture ended up shattering apart."

While the crowd was feeling depressed by the situation before them, Zhang Xuan suddenly spoke up with an apologetic look. "Even though we did not manage to obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage, we still have the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm. Mastering it should induce a significant rise in your individual fighting prowess."

"Un." The crowd nodded.

There was no way around it anymore.

Since Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul had already dissipated, who else would possibly know what the heritage was and where it could found?

There was no point brooding over it anymore.

At the very least, they still had a powerful palm art left.

With this thought in mind, the crowd turned to the stone tablet once more, but a familiar, crisp sound echoed yet again.

Kacha! Kacha!

Innumerable cracks crept across all of the stone tablets with an unstoppable momentum.

Guild Leader Han was the first to realize what was going on, and he quickly explained to the dumbfounded crowd, "These stone tablets have long exceeded their lifespan. It was only with the reinforcement of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul that they were able to hold on for so long. With the dissipation of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul, they are rapidly deteriorating as well..."

However, before he could finish his words, the ground suddenly began shaking intensely as well. It felt as if the countdown to the utter destruction of the folded space

had just begun ticking.

"Let's quickly leave! Just like the stone tablets, the folded space for the trial was held in place by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul as well. We have to get out of here as soon as we can." Right after saying those words, Guild Leader Han hurriedly rushed off, leading the way forward.

Knowing that any delay could result in them being trapped eternally within this collapsing folded space, they hurriedly followed Guild Leader Han as well, not daring to hesitate.

Zhang Xuan also stuck close to the group.

Not too long later, they returned back to the flower garden, only to see that Luo Ruoxin was no longer around. They quickly rushed back the way they had come from, and right after they stepped out from the door, the nine doors behind them abruptly collapsed before vanishing altogether. It was as if what they had gone through earlier was only a mere dream.

"This..."

The crowd looked at one another, and cold sweat gushed down their backs.

It was fortunate that they had cleared the trial, thus causing the seal that prevented them from leaving to collapse. Otherwise, they might have just disappeared along with the folded space.

That was really a close shot!

"Where is Ruoxin?" Zhang Xuan asked as he scanning his surroundings anxiously.

She was not in the flower garden earlier, so why was she not outside either?

Worried, Zhang Xuan was about to use his Eye of Insight to track Luo Ruoxin's whereabouts when he suddenly saw the latter flying back from the distance.

Luo Ruoxin landed before him and asked, "How was it? Have you obtained the heritage?"

"Cough cough... We didn't obtain the heritage. Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul

ended up dissipating after being traumatized by Principal Zhang's words before he could even present us with the heritage," Mu shi explained awkwardly.

"Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul dissipated?" Luo Ruoxin turned a curious gaze to the young man before her.

"I..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head, not knowing how to respond to her gaze.

All he had done was to share the alterations he had made to the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm with the other party. It was not like he had said anything much. How was he to know that the other party would be so trauma-prone?

To think that he was even known as an ancient sage...

"This is the manual of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm that I altered earlier. Feel free to cultivate it. Consider it compensation for joining the expedition to the ancient domain." Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan began writing down a copy of his corrected Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm manual before passing it over to the crowd.

Regardless of whether Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had dissipated due to his words or not, it was a fact that he had prevented the others from obtaining the heritage. The least he could do was offer the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm manual to them as compensation.

"Thank you..."

The eyes of the crowd lit up in agitation.

Wu shi flipped open the manual, and the others quickly turned their eyes over.

Not too long later, they were done going through the secret manual, and they could not help but turn their gazes toward the young man before them with horrified looks.

"Principal Zhang... is this really the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm? Did you really achieve Minor Accomplishment in it within just six hours of practice?"

They gulped subconsciously.

Without a doubt, the palm art was indeed very powerful. However, it was for the very

same reason that mastering it was an extremely difficult feat as well.

Putting everything else aside, even if a 7-star high-tier master teacher like Wu Shi were to devote his effort to the technique, it would at least take ten years for him to achieve Novice mastery, let alone Minor Accomplishment.

Yet... such a difficult battle technique, and the fellow before them had actually managed to achieve Minor Accomplishment within just six hours. Furthermore, he was able to harness greater strength than Ancient Sage Qiu Wu when both of them were at the same cultivation. Just how in the world did he do it?

It was no wonder Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul ended up being traumatized to the point of dissipation. If it had been them, they would have reacted in the same manner as well!

Thinking back, his previous claim of saying that he had attempted to accept Ancient Sage Qiu Wu as his student is likely true as well...

That freak! the crowd thought in their minds.

Chapter 1073

Meeting the Skyleaf King Once More

Zhang Xuan watched as the crowd cultivated the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, but even after a while had passed, none of them was able to reach Novice mastery. He couldn't help but shake his head at that sight.

While he had altered eighteen of the palm art's flaws, there were still nine more to go. As such, practitioners of the technique would still require a vast amount of zhenqi in order to execute it.

The members of the expedition team weren't weak either, but unlike Zhang Xuan, they hadn't cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher and were lacking in comparison.

It couldn't be helped that they wouldn't be able to master the technique in a moment's time.

As the saying goes, 'even the most capable of housewives are unable to prepare a meal without ingredients'. No matter how good a teacher Zhang Xuan was, there was nothing he could if the crowd's zhenqi capacity and purity were lacking.

"I am heading to the Saint Ascension Hall to find the old principal. Is there anyone who wishes to tag along?" Knowing that they wouldn't make much progress at this rate, Zhang Xuan spoke up and said.

In any case, he had already imparted the complete Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm to them, so how far they could take the palm art to would depend on their own aptitude.

Previously, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had said that the old principal and the Skyleaf King had gone into the Saint Ascension Hall. If they intended to save the old principal, they would have to head there as well.

"Let's go there together!" Wu shi and the others replied with a nod.

They had already memorized the formula to the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm,

so it was pointless for them to hang around the area anymore. It would be better for them to quickly find Zhang Yinqiu and the others and get out of the ancient domain.

"Where did you go earlier?"

As the group headed forward, Zhang Xuan suddenly remembered how Luo Ruoxin had left for a brief moment in their absence, so he sent a telepathic message over to ask out of curiosity.

"I just wandered around the area to take a look..." the young lady replied with a smile.

"I see..." Seeing that the other party was unwilling to speak, Zhang Xuan chose not to press any further too.

Following the markings on the map, it didn't take long for the crowd to arrive before a grand pavilion. There was no plaque above its entrance to indicate its name.

Shrouded by mist, it emanated an aura of divinity.

Taking a closer look, Guild Leader Han remarked with a grim expression, "There's a particularly powerful formation constructed around the area. Those who enter might find themselves unable to leave anymore. How about this? Why don't I, Wu shi, and Principal Zhang enter to take a look first? The rest of you should just wait outside for the moment!"

The pavilion had an illusory presence that felt as if it was concealed amidst the void—it was apparent that it was shrouded by a massive formation. Furthermore, recalling what Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had informed them earlier regarding the Saint Ascension Hall, there was very high chance that they might end up being stuck within. Given so, there was no need for all of them to undertake the risk together.

"Wu shi, none of us here fears death..." Feng Xun said with a grim expression.

"It's not a problem of whether you fear death or not, but that it will be the end of us all if we were to be trapped within the Saint Ascension Hall together. For the time being, it'll be better for the rest of you to stand guard outside. If we aren't out by three days, we may require you to seek help for us." Wu shi said grimly.

"Alright then..." Feng Xun and the others hesitated for a while before nodding reluctantly.

"You should wait outside as well. Don't worry, I'll be fine..." Zhang Xuan looked at Luo Ruoxin and smiled.

He had no idea what would happen within, but there was no doubt that great danger lay within. He didn't want the other party to undertake the risk as well.

"Let's go together. At the very least, we will be able to look out for one another." the young lady said.

"But..." Zhang Xuan was planning to dissuade Luo Ruoxin, but upon meeting the latter's resolute gaze, he hesitated for a brief moment before eventually nodding. "Alright. However, you must be very careful after we enter. No matter what happens, your safety comes first!"

With a light smile, Luo Ruoxin nodded.

Afraid that the escaped fragmented Primordial Spirit of the Skyleaf King would endanger the lives of the remaining group, Zhang Xuan had Guild Leader Han to construct a grade-7 pinnacle Slaughter Formation to protect the surroundings. Only after that was done did they step into the pavilion.

The formation constructed around the pavilion worked in a similar fashion to the seal in the Subterranean Gallery in the sense that it was unidirectional. One would face no impediment entering the pavilion, but after stepping in, the formation would turn into an unbreakable wall confining them within.

"We are indeed trapped inside..."

Upon walking into the pavilion, they could feel that the space behind them was sealed up, and they glanced at one another with grim expressions.

They quickly scanned their surroundings, and after realizing that there was no apparent danger in the area, they heaved a sigh of relief before advancing ahead.

The first floor of the pavilion was extremely vast. There were several rows of stone tablets, and every single one of them was densely inscribed with words.

"These are... insights to achieving a breakthrough to Saint realm?"

Taking a closer look and realizing what the content inscribed on the stone tablets

were, Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin traded surprised gazes.

They had seen the words on the stone tablets before. They were identical to the insights inscribed on the road up the mountain leading to the Saint Ascension Platform!

"It seems like the Saint Ascension Hall does have a close connection to the Saint Ascension Platform..."

Similar names and stone tablets with identical contents, that was far too much to pass off as a coincidence.

Wu shi and Guild Leader Han seemed to have been to the Saint Ascension Platform before as well, and when they saw the content on the stone tablets, they were stunned for a brief moment as they frowned in bewilderment.

Proceeding ahead, they were about to enter the second floor when a surge of sword qi suddenly flew for them from the depths of the Saint Ascension Hall.

Boom!

Wu shi and Guild Leader Han immediately drove their zhenqi to the maximum and rushed forward to face the sudden assault of sword qi.

Even without a formation between them, they were still able to synergize their strength together to produce a might far greater than what they could achieve individually.

Peng!

Upon collision with the sword qi, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han were immediately forced back several steps as their faces paled.

"It's the Skyleaf King..." Zhang Xuan exclaimed.

To overwhelm the combined might of two Saint 4-dan experts with just a sword qi in itself... The only one who was capable of this feat was only the Skyleaf King, whom was trapped in the Saint Ascension Hall as well.

"Hehehe, not bad! Zhang Xuan, I might not have been able to do anything to you if

you hadn't entered the Saint Ascension Hall. But since you chose to come in, don't even dream about getting out of here alive!" With a cold harrumph, the Skyleaf King's voice echoed deafeningly throughout the Saint Ascension Hall.

In the next moment, a towering figure slowly walked out from the depths of the pavilion.

Unlike the Primordial Spirit whom they had seen before, the Skyleaf King before them possessed a tangible body. He had a tall stature which towered over even the Scarletleaf King and the Stoneleaf King.

"You recognize me? Then, that fragmented Primordial Spirit..." Zhang Xuan was stunned for an instant before realizing that the fragmented Primordial Spirit must have reported the happenings back to the Skyleaf King through some unique means.

Or perhaps, the fragmented Primordial Spirit might have even flown back in to fuse back together with the Skyleaf King.

"Since you are so audacious as to harm my Primordial Spirit, I'm going to make sure that you suffer a fate worse than death!" Sneering coldly, the Skyleaf King raised his finger and flicked it lightly towards Zhang Xuan.

Alarmed, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han hurriedly rushed forward to cover Zhang Xuan, driving their zhenqi to its capacity to fend off the Skyleaf King's attack.

Peng! Peng!

With two dull thuds, the duo was sent flying.

They were top-notch experts even when taking the entire Qingyuan Conferred Empire into account, but their cultivation was still a step away from matching up with the Skyleaf King, and this single step produced a world of difference in their fighting prowess.

"Principal Zhang, run away!"

Wu shi forcefully twisted his body so as to regain his balance and land back onto the floor, but the rebound from doing so caused a spurt of blood to spew from his mouth. Knowing that it would be difficult for them to fend off the Skyleaf King, Wu shi bellowed.

Even before the other party had drawn out his Primordial Spirit, the both of them were already no match for him. If the other party were to really use his full strength, they could be annihilated in an instant!

"Run away? Are you really that delusional as to think that you can still run away at this point?" the Skyleaf King burst into laughter as he grasped at the space before him.

Huala!

In an instant, a powerful force shrouded the entire hall, sealing all paths of escape for them.

"This is truly bad..." Not expecting that they would meet with a fully-powered Skyleaf King right after entering the Saint Ascension Hall, Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed.

The other party was already guarded against him, so it would be impossible for him to beguile the other party to go along with his flow anymore. At the same time, fighting the other party face-on wasn't an option either. Were they really going to meet their end here?

"Break!"

Raising his palm, he executed the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, directing it towards the seal which the Skyleaf King had just set up.

Weng!

Similar to the surface of a lake, upon striking on the seal, the force rippled on it for a moment, but it didn't break it apart. Instead, a force suddenly surged back towards Zhang Xuan, forcing him to retreat several steps back.

"This is a secret art which I have come up with in the two years I was trapped here. Not even a Saint 5-dan expert will be able to break it open, so do you think that a Nascent Saint cultivator like you will be able to do so?" Noting Zhang Xuan's actions, the Skyleaf King scoffed coldly.

Guild Leader Han and Wu shi and stood up and attempted their strongest battle techniques against the seal, but it was completely ineffective as well.

"I still need to comprehend those stuff that Kong shi left behind, so I have no time to

be idling here with you. Let's end this quickly." Gazing upon the group coldly, the Skyleaf King raised his finger and shot a burst of sword qi towards them once more.

This time, the might harnessed within the sword qi was greater than the ones before. It was directed straight towards Zhang Xuan, and if it were to strike, not even a deity would be able to bring him back to life.

"It won't be easy to get out of here alive..." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

He wasn't even a match for a fragment of the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit, let more the other party at full strength. Furthermore, it seemed like the other party had also advanced his cultivation a fair bit over the past two years, placing them in an extremely disastrous position.

Nevertheless, he wasn't one to give up without a fight. Just as he was about to let his clone out to withstand the might of the sword qi, a brilliant radiance suddenly burst in the area. A loud buzzing sound reverberated before a thick layer of mist abruptly set into the area.

"It's a grade-7 pinnacle formation plate..."

Only a grade-7 pinnacle formation plate could produce such a thick layer of mist which even Saint realm experts couldn't peer through in an instant.

But... grade-7 pinnacle formation plates were incredibly rare, such that even Guild Leader Han didn't have any of it. Why would it suddenly appear here?

"Everyone, follow me..."

Just as the crowd was feeling deeply perplexed, a voice abruptly sounded in their ears. Following which, the silhouette of an elder appeared before their eyes.

"That is... Vice Principal Ji Yan?" Upon getting a closer glimpse of the other party's appearance, Wu shi couldn't help but exclaim.

"I'm indeed Ji Yan. Wu shi, please follow me..." the elder nodded hurriedly as he gestured forward.

"Alright!" Nodding, Wu shi beckoned for the others to follow them closely before heading in the direction gestured by the elder.

"Vice Principal Ji Yan?" Hearing the conversation between the duo, Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

Just like the previous Vice Principal Mu Renxu, the elder before him was a vice principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy as well. The other party had entered the ancient domain together with Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu back then, and one way or another, they had managed to survive til now.

"His cultivation..." While following behind the group, Zhang Xuan discreetly sneaked a peek at the elder, and his eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

Vice Principal Ji Yan should only possess a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle two years ago, just like Vice Principal Mu Renxu and the others. Yet, at this moment, his cultivation was already at Saint 4-dan, on par with Wu shi and Guild Leader Han!

To leap three realms within just two years, and in Saint realm at that... This was too exaggerated!

"Your strength..." Having noticed the anomaly in Vice Principal Ji Yan's strength as well, Wu shi couldn't help but ask.

"The spiritual energy in here is significantly more concentrated as compared to the external world, and Kong shi has also left behind a fair bit of treasures. On top of that, we had to pit our wits and strength against the Skyleaf King day after day in the past two years, so we would have long died if we hadn't managed to grow that quickly..." Vice Principal Ji Yan replied with a bitter smile.

Noting a particular word in Vice Principal Ji Yan's words, Zhang Xuan asked, "How many people are left in your group?"

The expedition team which the old principal had brought into the ancient domain back then consisted of roughly a group of thirty. Considering how there were roughly a dozen corpses outside, there should be at least seventeen or eighteen of them survivors remaining.

"There are less than three of us remaining..." Vice Principal Ji Yan sighed deeply.

"Less than three of us?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed by the response.

There must be either two or three of them remaining in the group. What did less than

three mean?

Could there be two and a half of them remaining?

Chapter 1074

We Can't Escape!

"You will know once you come along with me..." Noting the perplexed looks on the faces around him, Vice Principal Ji Yan shook his head bitterly and replied.

Traversing through the mist, they soon arrived at a certain room.

There were all kinds grade-7 pinnacle seals and traps lying all around the area. Even for an expert of the Skyleaf King's caliber, there was no doubt that he would be torn into shreds if he were to be trapped within them.

Upon seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Judging from the current situation, it seemed like the Skyleaf King wielded the absolute advantage within the Saint Ascension Hall. Unable to stand up against him, they could only remain within this room and set up formations and traps so as to fend off the other party.

Pushing open the door and entering, the room was only roughly several dozen square meters large. There wasn't a single window within the room, and the only source of light within it was the dim radiance of a Night Illumination Pearl.

Leaning against the wall was an old man whose both legs and right arm had been severed. Nevertheless, upon seeing the group which had returned, he hurriedly flew up and rushed towards them with eyes filled with disbelief.

"Vice Principal Ji, this..."

For the past two years, they had been the only humans within the Saint Ascension Hall. Thus, it wasn't too difficult to imagine his imagination upon seeing Zhang Xuan and the others.

"Vice Principal Tan, this is Wu shi from Qingyuan Conferred Empire." Vice Principal Ji Yan introduced.

"Vice Principal Tan? You are Tan Qing from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?" Finding the name familiar, Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment, and a figure abruptly surfaced in his mind.

The Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had a total of four vice principals, and Mu Renxu, Ji Yan, and Tan Qing were three of them.

"That's indeed me..." Tan Qing nodded. With a perplexed look, he turned to Ji Yan and asked, "May I know how I should address these master teachers?"

"This... Actually, I encountered them while they were being pursued by the Skyleaf King, so I quickly saved them and led them back here. I haven't really gotten a chance to ask them for their names yet..." Vice Principal Ji Yan replied.

As the situation was very precarious earlier, there wasn't any time for them to introduce themselves to one another. As such, he wasn't too sure whom the other three beside Wu shi were either.

"This young man over here is the newly-appointed principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang shi. This young lady is Luo Ruoxin, Luo shi. Last but not least, this elder is the head of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Formation Master Guild, Han Xu." Wu shi swiftly introduced the group.

"Newly-appointed principal?" Upon hearing the introduction, the eyes of the duo quickly turned to Zhang Xuan, and a deep frown appeared on their foreheads.

They weren't able to report the matter to the headquarters before heading to the ancient domain due to the urgency of the matter back then, so their abrupt disappearance was bound to create some chaos in the leadership of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. It was understandable that they would attempt to elect a new principal as soon as possible in order to stabilize the situation, but still, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was still one of the Four Great Academies... How could they allow a mere Nascent Saint cultivator, not to mention such a young child, to become the principal?

Weren't they making too light of Hongyuan?

"Principal Zhang might be young, but he possesses extraordinary capabilities. It's due to him that we were able to advance through the ancient domain safely!" Noting the complicated looks on the duo, Wu shi could tell what they were thinking, so he

hurriedly stepped forward to speak on Zhang Xuan's behalf.

To be honest, Zhang Xuan was simply too young that it was inevitable that others would doubt his capabilities. Even he himself had doubted the legitimacy of the other party's inauguration as the principal back then, let more the duo before him.

"...You're right. How could a person who was able to venture so deeply into the ancient domain possibly be someone ordinary?" After hearing Wu shi's words, the duo pondered for a moment before nodding in agreement.

They had experienced the brutality of the Qiu Wu Palace firsthand, so they knew very well the dangers that lurked all around. Without outstanding capability, it was impossible for one to venture safely from the entrance to this point.

Not to mention, even a person as esteemed as Wu shi had chosen to speak on the behalf of Zhang Xuan.

Scanning the room, Zhang Xuan realized that a certain person was nowhere to be seen, so he asked with a perplexed frown, "Where is Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu?"

Since the two vice principals were still alive, the old principal who had just sent the Principal's Seal out shortly before should still be alive as well. Why wasn't he anywhere to be seen? Not to mention, Vice Principal Ji Yan had earlier replied his question with not a 'two' but a 'less than three'...

"Principal Zhang Yinqiu..." Ji Yan and Tan Qing glanced at one another as the light in their eyes dulled. After a moment of silence, Ji Yan was the one who spoke up, "He's already dead..."

"Dead? But Vice Principal Ji, didn't you say earlier that there were 'less than three' of you remaining? There are only two of you here..."

The one who spoke this time around was Guild Leader Han. Clearly, he had also noticed the anomaly in Vice Principal Ji's words earlier.

If there were only two of them remaining, an ordinary person would respond with a 'two'. However, Vice Principal Ji Yan had replied with a 'less than three' instead... There was bound to be a deeper reason behind it.

There was no way a 6-star pinnacle master teacher would make such an elementary

verbal mistake.

"Indeed. There is still one more person other than us around, and he is Principal Zhang Yinqiu. However, the current state he is in... It's truly no different from being dead... However, he isn't here at the moment. I can only bring you to meet him within a specific timing!" Vice Principal Ji Yan explained.

"No different from being dead?"

Wu shi and the others glanced at one another in bewilderment, unsure of what the two vice principals were driving at. However, looking at the duo, it seemed like they were reluctant to speak of it anymore, so they decided not to probe too deep at the moment as well.

After a momentary pause, Wu shi turned his gaze over and asked, "What happened two years ago? Why didn't you report the matter to the headquarter?"

In truth, Wu shi wasn't the only one who had been pondering over this question. Even Zhang Xuan found the matter incredulous as well.

Considering how the old principal had erected a tomb for himself in the Mausoleum of Principals, there was no doubt that he was aware that the dangers lurking in the ancient domain were far beyond his means. Given so, the logical course of action should be to report the matter to the superior Master Teacher Pavilion. So, why did he remain silent on the matter, choosing to assemble an expedition team out of his own academy instead?

"It's not that he doesn't want to report the matter to the headquarter, but that there was no time for it!"

Vice Principal Ji Yan shook his head with a bitter smile. "Wu shi, you are quite close with Principal Zhang Yinqiu, so you should be aware that he idolizes Elder Wu Yangzi a lot. The greatest interest in his pastime was to explore the history of Elder Wu Yangzi and investigate his disappearance... Under his relentless efforts, he eventually found some intelligence and an important artifact concerning the ancient domain. His immediate response was to report the matter to the headquarter, but somehow, the news managed to travel to the ears of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe before he could do so. In the end, not only did the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe manage to dupe the important artifact away, they even managed to learn of the deeper secrets concerning

the ancient domain...

"Shortly after, he learned that the ancient domain was on the verge of opening, and there was no time to be lost. Thus, he gathered all of us overnight and rushed over as soon as possible!"

Vice Principal Ji Yan's explanation only served to deepen the frown on Wu Shi's forehead, "Zhang Yinqiu has a Communication Jade Token connected straight to the headquarter. As long as he wishes to, he could inform the headquarter of the matter any time he liked. It wouldn't have delayed him by too much... So why didn't he do so?"

It wouldn't take more than ten breaths for Zhang Yinqiu to construct a message to the headquarter to inform them in detail of the entire incident! For a person who gathered an expedition team overnight and rushed right towards the ancient domain... Surely sending a message shouldn't be too difficult?

Claiming that 'there was no time for it' was truly a poor excuse!

"If I am not mistaken, instead of saying that the news traveled to the ears of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, perhaps it might be more accurate to say that they had insider news on the matter? In other words, a spy of the Otherworldly Demon had intercepted the message before it reached the headquarter, and that spy happens to be from the headquarter as well, and this left Old Principal Zhang Yinqiu deeply distrustful of the headquarter... Am I right?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a brief moment before stating his deduction.

Since Zhang Yinqiu didn't send out the message to the headquarter to inform that of the matter, that could only mean that there was something preventing him from doing so.

"This... Zhang Shi is indeed astute. It's indeed as you have said..." Hearing those words, Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing couldn't help but nod their heads in awe.

To be able to deduce this far based on the nuances of their words, this young Zhang Shi's discernment ability was truly outstanding. It was no wonder why he was eventually elected to succeed Principal Zhang Yinqiu as the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

"Spy? From the headquarter?" Wu Shi was stunned for a moment before he clenched his fists tightly together.

He was a smart person as well, and it didn't take him too long to figure out what was going on.

In the first place, Zhang Yinqiu didn't have much of an understanding of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion. Thus, when he was duped of the important artifact and intelligence from a fake master teacher from the headquarter, he became deeply apprehensive. He didn't know whom he could trust, so eventually, he didn't send out a message at all.

Perhaps Zhang Yinqiu was intending to pay a visit to the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion to inform them of the matter personally, but he abruptly received news that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was about to enter the ancient domain. Left with no choice, he could only assemble an expedition team by himself and head in personally, and eventually... none of them managed to return back.

"Who is it?" Wu shi eyes narrowed menacingly.

He knew all of the master teachers in the headquarter, so who in the world could the spy be?

"We are all trapped here, so it's meaningless even if we were to reveal the name to you now..." Vice Principal Ji Yan shook his head in disconsolation.

It was not like any one of them could escape and apprehend the spy, so what was the point of them speaking about the matter at the moment?

Since that was going to be the case, they might as well just remain silent, so as the very least, there would be one less frustration for them to bother about.

"Is it really impossible to escape from here?" Guild Leader Han asked.

"Un. I'm sure you should have seen the seal outside. It's constructed in a manner that makes it unidirectional, only allowing one to enter but not to leave. It is most probably set up by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu himself, so... unless one were to obtain his heritage and comprehend the secret behind the seal, otherwise it will be impossible to escape from here!" Vice Principal Tan Qing shook his head.

At this moment, he suddenly recalled a matter, and he looked at Wu shi and the others and asked with a gleam of hope in his eyes, "Right! Back then, the Skyleaf King was tight on our trail, and we weren't able to shake him free. As such, we could only escape

here directly. However, on your journey here, you should have noticed the door leading to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage, right? How is it? Did you obtain the heritage?"

"This..."

Hearing those words, a look of awkwardness surfaced on the faces of Wu Shi and the others.

They did manage to enter the correct door, they successfully met Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's sculpture as well, and they even cleared the trial smoothly... But, they still failed to obtain the heritage!

Would the two vice principals believe them if they were to tell them of such a bizarre matter?

"What's wrong? Could it be that... you didn't notice the mark Principal Zhang Yinqiu left behind?" Noticing the peculiar expressions on the faces around him, Vice Principal Ji Yan couldn't help but ask.

The mark was very apparent, so surely master teachers of their caliber should have noticed it easily!

"You were indeed the ones who had left the mark behind! But since you know that the heritage lies within the door, why didn't you enter to take a look?"

It was Guild Leader Han's turn to be perplexed this time around.

Since the mark was left behind by them, it should be apparent that they had opened the doors and confirmed the correct one to advance to. Since that was the case, why didn't they enter it? If they had chosen to enter it, the Skyleaf King could have died under the might of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu.

"Back then, we did manage to trigger the mechanism in the square that causes the nine doors to appear... However, shortly after we confirmed the right door, before we even had the opportunity to check it out, the Skyleaf King arrived at the square as well. The implications of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage is simply too great. If the Skyleaf King were to obtain it, it could become a calamity for the entire mankind! We can't afford to take such a gamble, and we dare not to either! Thus, Principal Zhang Yinqiu secretly left a mark on the door before rushing over here. Having a skeptical personality, even though the Skyleaf King saw the nine doors, he dared not to enter to

check them out either for fear of it being a trap, so he continued pursuing us instead. Eventually, all of us ended up here..." Vice Principal Ji Yan recounted the situation back then.

His words and description were nonchalant, but Zhang Xuan and the others could feel how intense the situation was back then.

The fact that Vice Principal Mu Renxu had lost his life in the square, and the others had to flee without having an opportunity to collect his corpse went to show how dangerous the situation was back then.

"By the time we entered the pavilion, we were already all exhausted. Even though we managed to slaughter all of the Otherworldly Demons aside from the Skyleaf King remained, we also suffered great casualties in the process, to the point that we are the only survivors of the initial expedition team... It is fortunate that the terrain within here is complicated, that's why we were able to survive til now. Otherwise, we would have sure been wiped out long ago..." Vice Principal Ji Yan sighed.

"I see!" The crowd nodded in response.

They had all experienced the fearsome might of the Skyleaf King themselves—even a collaboration between the powerful Wu shi and Guild Leader Han wasn't sufficient to match him. Considering how Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing were only at Saint 1-dan pinnacle back then, it wasn't difficult to imagine how helpless they would have been.

It had truly been difficult for them to have survived two years while being trapped with the Skyleaf King.

"Right, you still haven't told us whether you have managed to obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage or not?" After explaining the matter, Vice Principal Ji Yan asked once more.

This matter involved whether they would be able to escape from here or not, so he was determined to clarify this matter.

"This... We managed to clear the trial, but before Ancient Sage Qiu Wu could reveal to us what his heritage was, his fragmented soul had already dissipated after suffering multiple traumas from Principal Zhang!" After a long moment of silence, Wu shi finally spoke up.

Chapter 1075

Celestial Saint? I Can Give It a Try

"Dissipated... after suffering several traumas? What do you mean?" Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing were stunned, unable to process what they had just heard.

If the other party were to say that they failed to find the correct door or that they did not even trigger the mechanism that induced the appearance of the nine doors in the first place, they would still be able to understand it. But... to dissipate Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's soul by traumatizing him...

Why did it sound so profound that they could not understand a word of it?

May I trouble you to clarify the matter a little more?

Noticing the two bewildered faces before him, Wu Shi's face reddened. He really had no idea how he was supposed to explain the matter to them, so he turned to Guild Leader Han for help. "I think it'll be better for you to say it instead..."

"Alright. The situation is like this..." With a deep sigh, Guild Leader Han contemplated over his choice of phrases before he began recounting the matter.

"You are saying that... Zhang Shi managed to see through the flaws in Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's palm art? Not only did he manage to practice it to a mastery of Minor Accomplishment, he even corrected it on top of that?"

"Not to mention, he offered to take Ancient Sage Qiu Wu in as his student?"

The two vice principals widened their mouths in shock, and they nearly blacked out on the spot.

Surely, they must have been listening to a fictional story!

How could there be such a ridiculous master teacher in the world?

That was Ancient Sage Qiu Wu! All who had heard of his affairs would revere him like

a deity, not daring to even breathe loudly before him. Yet, that fellow actually offered to take Ancient Sage Qiu Wu in as his student?

Do you not understand the meaning of what taking a person in as your student means, or are your guts so inflated that even Ancient Sage Qiu Wu means nothing to you?

"Cough cough..." Noticing the shocked gazes of the duo on him, Zhang Xuan quickly explained himself. "All I did was share the flaws of the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm with Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. I didn't expect that he would be so brittle, collapsing at the slightest trauma. Jeez, he really does need to temper his mind a little more."

To be honest, he also did not intend for such a situation to happen. It was not as if he had done it intentionally.

"Brittle?"

"Temper?"

The duo was rendered completely speechless by Zhang Xuan's words.

One of the most renowned Ancient Sages of the Master Teacher Pavilion, a figure who had stood alongside the World's Teacher through numerous crises... It was already a blessing that he did not die from anger from having a several-dozen-millenniums-younger junior like Zhang Xuan attempting to take him in as his student, and yet, the young man expected him not to be traumatized by the matter?

Not to mention, he altered the prided palm art that the other party created on the spot, strengthening it significantly. The fact that Qiu Wu was still able to talk to him after that was already testimony to his incredible mental resilience.

A moment later, Vice Principal Ji Yan shook his head with a bitter smile. "So, you didn't receive the heritage either... It seems like we really won't be getting out of here today..."

A treasure trove was right before them, but that fellow ended up pushing it right off the cliff. How in the world did such a ridiculous master teacher become their new principal?

They were really starting to worry for the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy's future.

But in any case, without the heritage, they would not be able to escape from the place either. Their worry would not change a thing at all.

They were still hoping that those who had received their news would come to their rescue, but from the looks of it... their expectations might have truly been a little too high.

Paying no heed to the disappointed looks around him, Zhang Xuan asked, "What exactly is the Saint Ascension Hall? How is it related to the Saint Ascension Platform?"

Saint Ascension Hall and Saint Ascension Platform... Given how similar their names were and that they were both related to Kong shi, it was hard to believe that there was no relation between the both of them.

"There's indeed a relationship between the both of them. If I'm not mistaken..." Vice Principal Ji Yan began to reply, but before he could finish his words, the ground suddenly began trembling intensely, and it felt as if the pavilion would cave in on them at any moment.

Alarmed, Wu shi and the others asked anxiously, "What's going on?"

Vice Principal Ji Yan seemed to be very used to the trembling, and after a moment of hesitation, he said, "This happens every single day at irregular intervals... Let's go, I'll bring you to meet Principal Zhang Yinqiu. However, just a word of warning, we will only have an incense's time. We will have to return here before then, or else we will face grave danger like before."

"Meet Principal Zhang Yinqiu?" The crowd was stunned for a moment before nodding. "Alright!"

"Let's go!"

Without wasting any more time on words, Vice Principal Ji Yan led the way forward. As Vice Principal Tan Qing had lost three of his limbs, and there were several places where he would be unable to fly, he decided to remain behind.

Bypassing the many formations and traps outside, the group headed straight forward, and before long, they arrived at the very top of the Saint Ascension Hall. The roof of the Saint Ascension Hall was flat, and at the very center, there was a round platform, which emanated a brilliant glow.

The previous tremor seemed to have originated from the energy released by the round platform.

"This is..." Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

The round platform before him was identical to the one that had appeared after the cliff face on the Saint Ascension Platform collapsed previously.

Back then, after he had pointed out the flaws in Kong shi's writings, the cliff face broke apart, and a round platform emerged from within. Standing above it, he and Luo Ruoxin had ended up being transported into a folded space.

Back then, he had thought that the round platform was the place where Kong shi had seated when he ascended to become a Celestial Saint. However, from the looks of it now, it seemed like he was mistaken.

Noticing Zhang Xuan's confusion, Vice Principal Ji Yan explained, "Indeed. This is real Saint Ascension Platform that Kong shi left behind when he ascended to Sainthood. The one outside is nothing more than an imitation..."

"This is the real Saint Ascension Platform?" Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly.

The conferment of a Celestial Saint was not a small matter. The lands where the conferment occurred would surely be suffused with the energy of the world, so how could there only be a few halos here and there? Furthermore, how could such an important landmark be left open on the top of a mountain, not fearing that it would be found by anyone?

Activating his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan began examining the Saint Ascension Platform carefully.

There a peculiar sheet of light covering the top of the round platform, and ripples of energy were flowing on top of it. The ripples of energy seemed to carry an extraordinary quality to nourish the Saint aura within one. It felt like one could advance one's cultivation significantly just by taking in a whiff of it.

"Even a sliver of energy emanated from a Celestial Saint is a great nourishment to ordinary cultivators like us. It is due to it that I was able to advance my cultivation so quickly," Vice Principal Ji Yan said.

The others nodded in agreement.

The energy emanated by the round platform felt warm, as if one was bathed amid sacred light. Even though it had not been long since Wu shi and the others had arrived in the Saint Ascension Hall, they could feel that their thought process had quickened significantly, and the cells in their bodies had grown more vigorous as well. Under such circumstances, their rate of cultivation would be enhanced immensely.

As long as one's talent was not too bad, advancing three realms within just a short two years under such circumstances was entirely possible.

At this point, Vice Principal Ji Yan stepped forward, and pointing to an area not too far away from the round platform, he said, "Principal Zhang Yinqiu is here..."

Taken aback, the crowd hurriedly turned their gazes over, only to see a statue standing in the direction Vice Principal Ji Yan pointed out.

The statue was extremely lifelike, and it bore a striking resemblance with the paintings of Zhang Yinqiu within the Master Teacher Academy.

A calm voice suddenly came from the statue. "Wu shi? You are here..."

To their astonishment, just like the situation with Ancient Sage Qiu Wu earlier, the statue had opened his mouth and begun speaking.

"Zhang Yinqiu, why would you..." Seeing the plight his old friend was in, Wu shi could not help but feel a dull ache in his heart.

It was no wonder Vice Principal Ji Yan said that there were less than three of them remaining. The fact that Zhang Yinqiu was still able to speak and recognize them meant that he still retained consciousness, so he could not be considered dead yet. But... trapped within a lifeless statue, could he really be considered alive?

"In the midst of saving us, Principal Zhang Yinqiu's body was destroyed by the Skyleaf King. By a stroke of luck, the Saint Ascension Platform suddenly whirled into action at the moment, and under the nourishment of the sacred light, his soul managed to avoid dissipation, and he ended up latching onto a statue in the vicinity. Even though he retained his consciousness, he is unable to move or leave the premises," Vice Principal Ji Yan explained.

The situation back then had been extremely complex. Principal Zhang Yinqiu's physical body had been forcefully destroyed by the Skyleaf King, and just as everyone thought that he would have died, the Saint Ascension Platform that Kong shi had left behind suddenly worked its miracles. Under the warm glow of the sacred light, his soul managed to survive despite having lost its body, and he eventually ended up latching onto a nearby statue for survival.

As time passed, the statue began shaping itself into him. However, he was still unable to move at all. All he could manage to do was stand quietly and await the end of time. Honestly, there truly was not much difference from death.

Realization suddenly struck Zhang Xuan. The contract between the old principal and the Byzantium Helios Beast wasn't a soul contract but a blood contract. Given that the old principal's physical body was destroyed, the contract between them was naturally dispelled as well. That explains why I was unable to tell whom his master was through the Library of Heaven's Path.

Most of the saint beasts and spirit beasts he had tamed were contracted to him via a soul contract. Such a contract would place the souls of the tamed beasts under his control, thus making it impossible for them to betray him.

Naturally, most saint beasts and spirit beasts would not commit to such a disadvantageous contract to them unless they were forced into a corner. Thus, the norm was to establish a blood contract, and that was also the type of contract between the old principal and the Byzantium Helios Beast.

While blood contracts would grant the master a certain degree of control over their tamed beast, unlike soul contracts, the relationship would be automatically dispelled once the physical body of the owner died.

It was also due to this that the Library of Heaven's Path did not reflect the old principal as the Byzantium Helios Beast's master, thus resulting in the huge farce back then.

Seeing the sorrowful faces all around him, as well as the pale face of his old friend, Principal Zhang Yinqiu said with a smile, "Don't worry, this is actually not too bad. At the very least, I'm still alive..."

Being trapped in a statue was not something that he desired, but at the very least... it was better than having his soul dissipated entirely.

After consoling the crowd for a while, Zhang Yinqiu asked, "Since you were able to come this far, I'm sure you should have seen the marks I left behind. Did you obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage?"

As long as they had obtained the heritage, they would be able to finally escape from the Saint Ascension Hall for good.

Zhang Yinqiu himself would not be able to leave the area, but at the very least, Ji Yan and Tan Qing would be able to get away, thus preserving some strength for the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

"They didn't manage to obtain the heritage..." Ji Yan quickly filled Zhang Yinqiu in on the matter.

"You..."

Upon hearing the explanation, Zhang Yinqiu's eyes widened in shock. He looked at Zhang Xuan as if he was seeing a ghost. Many words lingered at the tip of his tongue, but eventually, he said helplessly, "Without the heritage of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, it'll be impossible for us to leave. Unless one of us can receive the acknowledgement of the heavens and be conferred as a Celestial Saint, we will be trapped in here for life!"

"Conferred as a Celestial Saint?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Un. The Saint Ascension Hall contains the true Saint Ascension Platform, as well as innumerable insights from other cultivators when they achieved Sainthood," Zhang Yinqiu said. "All of this is just for a single aim... Kong shi is hoping to raise another Celestial Saint among the later generations! As long as one can achieve a breakthrough on the Saint Ascension Platform and become a Celestial Saint, the seal surrounding the Saint Ascension Hall will fall apart immediately!"

Upon hearing the conditions to leave, a bitter smile emerged on the lips of Wu shi and the others. "That's impossible..."

"Indeed, how could that possibly be done?"

In the whole of history, only Kong shi had managed to receive the acknowledgement of the heavens and be conferred as a Celestial Saint. This was clear proof of how difficult the feat was, so how could they possibly hope to emulate that?

Ji Yan sighed. "When we joined this expedition, we resigned ourselves to death and made arrangements accordingly. It's already a blessing of the heavens that we are still alive at this point."

"Actually..." Noting the air of desolation among the crowd, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before looking at them.

"A breakthrough to Celestial Saint, I can give it a try!"

Chapter 1076

He Slaughtered Nine of Them

"You?" Hearing Zhang Xuan's interjection, everyone paused for a moment.

All of them looked at him as if they were looking at a fool.

"Cough cough!" Unable to stand the awkward silence that drifted in the air, Wu shi coughed loudly before continuing on, "Principal Zhang, I know that you possess superior talent, and you have a unique interpretation to cultivation. However... Celestial Saint is not something which anyone can just become. In fact, it could be said that it is impossible for anyone to succeed!"

"Indeed. I have specially looked into the process how Kong shi ascended to Sainthood, traveling to the Saint Ascension Platform myself and flipping through many records. Based on my deduction, the first requirement to becoming a Celestial Saint is to be a Celestial Master Teacher. Only when the heavens recognize your occupation will you be qualified to become a Celestial Saint. Other than that, you must also practice a peerless cultivation technique which grants you incomparably condensed zhenqi. That is the basic requirement for you to knock on the doors of the world and rid yourself of all impurities, thus stepping on the path to unparalleled greatness!"

Hearing Zhang Xuan speaking such words, Zhang Yinqiu couldn't help but offer a word of advice as well. "The fact that you are able to decipher the secret hidden amidst Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's palm art shows that you have an exceptional understanding of battle techniques. Also, considering how you were able to come so far through the ancient domain despite only being a Nascent Saint, you must possess an extraordinary cultivation technique as well. However, just that in itself wouldn't suffice for you to become a Celestial Saint!"

"Ascending to Sainthood is no child's play. Throughout history, how many geniuses do you think have emerged amongst the Sage Clans and the Combat Master Hall? Yet, for several dozen millenniums, there was not a person who was said to have succeeded in becoming a Celestial Saint. This goes to show how difficult it is. Principal Zhang, you can give it a try, but you really shouldn't put too much hope into it..." Guild Leader Han said with a bitter smile.

There was not a person who thought well of Zhang Xuan.

"This... Alright then!" Zhang Xuan was considering on whether he should reveal his identity, but eventually, he chose to shake his head and remain silent.

In truth, while he was a Celestial Master Teacher and he had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher, he was still unsure whether he would truly be able to become a Celestial Saint either. He didn't want to give them false hope only to have it shattered eventually.

Besides, he was a humble person at heart, and boasting about his own achievements wasn't something that a person like him would do anyway.

"Un. It's good that you have managed to think it through. Becoming a Celestial Saint is no easy task. Of course, it'll be best if one of us succeeds in doing so, but otherwise, there's no need to get too disappointed either..." Vice Principal Ji Yan nodded. He was just about to continue speaking when the layer of light atop the round platform abruptly wavered, and gradually, it began dimming.

Upon seeing this sight, Vice Principal Ji Yan's face immediately turned grave. "Time's up, everyone. We have to leave quickly. Principal Zhang Yinqiu, we will visit you again tomorrow..."

After saying those words, Vice Principal Ji Yan quickly led the group down.

Seeing how anxious Vice Principal Ji Yan was, the crowd quickly followed behind him. Not too long later, they finally returned to the narrow room they were in previously, and only then did Vice Principal Ji Yan heave a sigh of relief.

"What's going on? Why do we have to rush back so anxiously?" Wu shi couldn't help but ask.

"Didn't I say earlier that we only have an incense's time?" Vice Principal Ji Yan asked.

"Un." The crowd nodded.

The other party did say such words before.

"For nearly a year now, the Saint Ascension Platform has been releasing a brilliant glow every single day. During the period of time which the Saint Ascension Hall is

permeated by the light, the Skyleaf King would have no choice but to remain in his hiding spot, not daring to move in the least. Otherwise, he would risk being burned by the sacred light and suffer severe damage to his Primordial Spirit. We have been making use for this period of time to explore the Saint Ascension Hall... However, the light will only remain for roughly an incense's time, and once it retreats, the Skyleaf King will rush out and slaughter any of us who is still loitering vulnerably in the area!" Vice Principal Ji Yan explained.

Everyone came to a realization.

This explained why Vice Principal Ji Yan was so anxious when he saw that the sacred light was about to die out. If the Skyleaf King were to assault them before they made their way back to the room, they would have been in grave danger.

"I was wondering why the rest of you are able to make such a great advancement in your cultivation realm over the past two years whereas the Skyleaf King still remains in Leaving Aperture realm primary stage... It seems like the sacred light that you have spoken of does play a huge role in this matter!" Wu Shi remarked in realization.

"You're right. Master teachers are able to raise their cultivation by absorbing the sacred light, but Otherworldly Demons aren't able to do the same. As such, the Skyleaf King hasn't been able to grow as quickly as the rest of us. However, he has conquered the entire Saint Ascension Hall for himself... Back then, probably in order to ensure that there would be at least one amongst the later generation who would be able to become a Celestial Saint as well, Kong Shi had left behind quite a fortune behind, but it is currently being dominated by the Skyleaf King! Over the past two years, even though he hadn't achieved a breakthrough yet, his Primordial Spirit has been getting more and more powerful. With our current strength, we won't be able to deal with him." Vice Principal Ji Yan shook his head.

"You said that the Saint Ascension Platform only began releasing a brilliant glow every single day within the past year? Does that not happen in the past?" Zhang Xuan's focus was a little different from the others. He was more interested in the Saint Ascension Platform.

"A year ago, the Saint Ascension Platform was still rather normal. While it would emanate sacred light from time to time back then, the intensity was nothing close to what we saw previously, and its frequency was irregular as well. It's only around the end of the eighth month last year that it suddenly began releasing huge bursts of light,

as if heralding the arrival of a certain someone. Well, I don't really know the details myself either..." Ji Yan pondered for a moment before replying with a nod.

Trapped within the Saint Ascension Hall, where the concept of day and night didn't exist, they were gradually losing their grasp over time. Nevertheless, as master teachers, they were still able to fathom a rough guess

"Who could it be waiting for? Kong shi?" Right after saying those words, Guild Leader Han shook his head with a helpless smile.

Kong shi had gone missing several dozen millenniums ago. Even the 72 Sages knew not about his whereabouts, let more the others.

It was inconceivable that he would return all of a sudden after so many years.

"Not even Saints possess a longevity of several dozen millenniums, so I don't think it's possible that the Saint Ascension Platform is waiting for Kong shi. Perhaps, you might have triggered some kind of mechanism within the Saint Ascension Hall after arriving here, thus resulting in the emanation of sacred light every day..." Wu shi remarked.

"That might be the case..." Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing nodded.

Limited by their strength and eye of discernment, there were many things that were beyond their understanding. Putting everything aside, they had no idea where the sacred light emanating from the Saint Ascension Platform had come from. It was also inconceivable to them why it could keep the Skyleaf King at bay while benefiting the master teachers.

"Alright, let's not talk about this matter anymore. Those are simply too far away from us at the moment, so there's no point discussing it. Vice Principal Tan Qing, I have a Grand Intermittence Pill here. Give it a try, perhaps it could resolve your current condition..." Shaking his head, Wu shi turned to Vice Principal Tan Qing and whipped out a jade bottle.

At this moment, Vice Principal Tan Qing had both of his legs and right arm severed, crippling his movements. Only the legendary grade-7 Grand Intermittence Pill, said to be able to induce the regrowth a severed limb, would have a chance to resolve his condition.

Back then, Zhang Xuan had also had a Grand Intermittence Pill forged for Wei Ruyan

in order to restore her physical health.

"Thank you, Wu shi!" Upon seeing the pill, Vice Principal Tan Qing's eyes lit up in excitement.

He had already spent two years as a cripple, and there was no way he could turn down an opportunity to regrow his severed limbs.

He swiftly took the jade bottle and corked it open. There was exactly one Grand Intermittence Pill inside, but its tier wasn't too high, having only achieved Formation.

Consuming the pill, an incredible surge of vitality immediately gushed through his body. In that instant, Vice Principal Tan Qing felt an incredible itch overwhelming his body. The severed stumps of his limbs began to slowly grow out, but before they could form complete limbs, everything abruptly came to a halt.

Vice Principal Tan Qing shook his head bitterly and said, "The Grand Intermittence Pill can indeed resolve my condition, but the tier of the pill here is simply too low. Furthermore, as my limbs were severed by the Skyleaf King, there is still some of his killing intent lingering there that hinders the regrowth of my limbs... It seems like I won't be able to recover for the time being..."

The Grand Intermittence Pill contained an immense amount of vitality that allowed for the regrowth of a limb, but Vice Principal Tan Qing was simply too severely wounded. A single pill wouldn't suffice for his recovery.

"That... I only have one pill here..." Wu shi frowned.

The Grand Intermittence Pill was extremely valuable, such that it would be extremely difficult to find even one of it in the markets of Qingyuan Conferred Empire. Even Wu shi had to pay a heavy price in order to procure one, and he hadn't too willing to use it due to its immense value. However... who could have thought that even the seemingly miraculous pill wouldn't be enough to bring about Vice Principal Tan Qing's recovery?

"I have forged the Grand Intermittence Pill before. If we have sufficient medicinal herbs here, we can try forging it..." Zhang Xuan said.

"Forge it right here?... I should have most of the medicinal herbs required for its forging within my storage ring at the moment, but... I am still lacking the main

ingredient, Grand Intermittence Grass." Wu shi said with a frown.

"Grand Intermittence Grass is simply too rare, I don't have any of it here either..." Guild Leader Han shook his head.

Zhang Xuan could only smile bitterly upon seeing this sight too.

The Grand Intermittence Grass was a rather elusive medicinal herb. Back then, he had to specially apply for one from the Qingyuan Empire Apothecary Guild in order to forge the Grand Intermittence Pill.

Even though he had obtained quite a few good stuff from slaying the Otherworldly Demon Kings, there wasn't any Grand Intermittence Grass in their storage rings.

"Actually, there is a Grand Intermittence Grass right in this Saint Ascension Hall!" At this moment, Vice Principal Ji Yan suddenly spoke up.

"There's one here?" The crowd was taken aback.

"Un. Didn't I say earlier that Kong shi has left quite a fortune behind here so that those of the later generations can successfully achieve a breakthrough to become a Celestial Saint? It happens that there is a Grand Intermittence Grass amongst the fortune he has left behind... Back then, I secretly sneaked into the area to take a look, so I am confident of it. However, the area is currently dominated by the Skyleaf King." Vice Principal Ji Yan said.

"This..." Hearing those words, bitter smiles emerged on the lips of the crowd.

If the Grand Intermittence Grass was just lying around the area, they could still secretly head over there while the Saint Ascension Platform was emanating its sacred light and retrieve it. However, if the Skyleaf King were to keep it with him... it would nigh impossible for them to lay their hands on it.

"Regarding the fortune you spoke about, where is it stored? I can secretly head over to take a look. If I could sneak away the Grand Intermittence Grass while I am at it, Vice Principal Tan could be relieved from his suffering." Zhang Xuan said.

Hearing those words, Wu shi and the others frowned, "That's too dangerous, the Skyleaf King is bound to be in the vicinity. Let's think of another way instead!"

"Indeed. The Skyleaf King is a Leaving Aperture realm expert, so there's no way you will be able to stand against him. Furthermore, just like us, he's bound to have installed all kinds of formations and mechanisms in his base so as to prevent us from assaulting him while his guard is down. If you were to head over recklessly and get caught in one of his traps, there's no way that we will be able to save you..." Vice Principal Ji Yan added.

"Don't worry, I have my means. Besides, I will just be taking a look. I will only grab the Grand Intermittence Grass if I spot an opening, or else, I will return straightaway. Rest assured, I am not so foolish as to challenge the Skyleaf King head on..." Zhang Xuan said.

"This..." The crowd glanced at one another hesitantly. Wu shi opened his mouth once more to dissuade Zhang Xuan from the matter, but before he could speak, Zhang Xuan had already interjected, "Don't worry. Even if I am captured by the Skyleaf King, I do have some means of my own to escape from him!"

"...Alright then." Seeing how confident Zhang Xuan was, Wu shi eventually relented.

...

"Alright, I will be heading out first then..."

After Vice Principal Ji Yan pointed out the directions, Zhang Xuan left the room with a reassuring smile, and after making a few turns, he disappeared from everyone else's eyes.

"This... Wu shi, it's too reckless to have him go on his own. He can't possibly deal with the Skyleaf King himself!" Vice Principal Tan Qing couldn't help but speak up worriedly.

He didn't want others to lose their life in the midst of saving him.

Vice Principal Ji Yan also shared the same thoughts as well, and he couldn't help but pace around the room anxiously.

"Well, I do think that it's a little reckless as well, but... if you were to know about Principal Zhang's accomplishments in his battles with the Otherworldly Demons, you will probably think that he just might succeed as well!" Knowing that they would respond in such a manner, Wu shi replied.

"Accomplishments? What accomplishments?" The duo looked at him curiously.

"Since you have been together with the Skyleaf King for so long, I believe that you should have heard of the Ten Great Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, right?" Wu shi asked.

"Of course. They are said to be experts on par with the Skyleaf King. Every single one of them wield incredible strength that could easily devastate any Tier-1 Empire. They are truly frightening existences!" Vice Principal Ji Yan nodded.

"Indeed. Most of them possess strength on par with me, some superior even. But singlehandedly, Principal Zhang..."

At this point, a helpless look appeared on Wu shi's face as he continued.

"...managed to slaughter the other nine of them!"

Chapter 1077

Yo

"He managed to slaughter the other nine of them?"

"Are you sure you aren't messing with us?" Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing widened their eyes in shock.

Over the past two years, they had pitted their wits, courage, and strength against the Skyleaf King day after day, and they were on the verge of being driven mad from all of that, but they were still unable to faze the latter in the slightest. On the contrary, the number of master teachers on their side was slowly growing fewer and fewer, such that only the both of them were left.

Yet, that fellow, a Nascent Saint cultivator, encountered the remaining nine of the Ten Great Kings and managed to slaughter all of them? Was that for real?

"Not only so," Wu shi continued, "on one occasion, the Skyleaf King was hidden a fragment of his Primordial Spirit among our expedition team, and he ended up nearly being crippled by Principal Zhang."

"Thus, I feel that as long as he proceeds carefully, it might just work out. In fact... I am wondering that if we place him and the Skyleaf King in the same room, would he just happen be the one to walk out from the room alive?"

"This..."

For a very long time, Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing found themselves unable to speak a word at all. They glanced at one another for a very long while before they finally found their words once more. "Just what kind of principal did the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy nominate this time around?"

All this while, due to Zhang Xuan's young age, they had thought that it was infeasible for him to become the principal. After all, there were bound to be more experienced and qualified master teacher who could hold the fort much better than him. However, after hearing the latter's accomplishments...

Probably not even Zhang Yinqiu could match up to the latter.

...

While the crowd were still in the midst of a shock in the small room, Zhang Xuan had already arrived at the vast lobby of the Saint Ascension Hall.

There is no doubt that I will be found if I head there in my current form. I should switch to my soul instead.

With a swift movement, Zhang Xuan found a remote corner before drawing his soul out from his glabella. After which, he stored his physical body in the Myriad Anthive Nest before placing the Anthive Nest into his storage ring.

If he were to head there with his physical body, it would be very easy for the Skyleaf King to notice him, and it would be difficult for him to escape as well. He would be in a much safer position in his soul form.

At Leaving Aperture realm, the Skyleaf King's Spiritual Perception was probably strong enough to easily discern everything in his surroundings, but Spiritual Perception wasn't an ability that one could constantly maintain.

As the saying goes, 'even the wary tiger occasionally rests'. As long as Zhang Xuan sneaked in while the other party had his guard down, it would not be too difficult for him to sneak the Grand Intermittence Grass away.

Thus, Zhang Xuan's soul began discreetly heading to where Vice Principal Ji Yan had pointed out earlier. Not too long later, a chamber appeared before his eyes.

Just like the room that Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing dwelled in, the chamber had all kinds of grade-7 formations constructed around it. If an ordinary man were to step into it, he would find himself losing his sense of direction in an instant. However, Zhang Xuan was a 7-star pinnacle formation master himself. As complex as the formations were, they were not sufficient to keep him at bay.

After maneuvering nimbly around the formations, Zhang Xuan soon arrived at the entrance of the chamber. He secretly took a peek in.

The chamber was extremely spacious, and it was permeated with concentrated spiritual energy. Innumerable treasures were laid out neatly around the room,

reminiscent of a massive treasure vault.

Most of them were medicinal herbs, pills, books on how to achieve a breakthrough to Saint realm, and the sort. In comparison, there were very few weapons in the chamber, or perhaps even none at all.

It seemed like Kong shi had really put quite some effort into preparing the room so as to ensure that the later generations would have a Celestial Saint of their own as well.

The Skyleaf King actually isn't around...

Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and scanned the room, and upon realizing that the Skyleaf King was nowhere to be found, his eyes lit up in excitement.

I should move quickly!

Zhang Xuan was still in the midst of thinking up a countermeasure for how he should enter the room if the Skyleaf King was within. However, since the latter was not around, there was no need for him to restrain himself.

Grabbing his storage ring tightly, he carefully entered the chamber in his soul form.

Medicinal herbs took up the bulk of the treasures within the chamber. All in all, there were at least several hundred types of saint herbs within the room. Despite being stored in the chamber for innumerable years, they had not lost their medicinal properties as a result of ageing. Instead, under the nourishment of the concentrated spiritual energy in the area, they were becoming more and more potent!

However, one thing that Zhang Xuan swiftly noticed was that there was a unique formation sealing away every single one of the medicinal herbs, preventing anyone from coming into contact with them.

It's no wonder the Skyleaf King didn't store the medicinal herbs into the storage ring. He probably has no way of breaking these seals, Zhang Xuan thought internally.

The seals were built in a manner similar to the seal in the Subterranean Gallery. Master teachers could pass through the seal with relative ease, but Otherworldly Demons weren't able to do the same.

In other words, despite having guarded the chamber and watching over these

medicinal herbs for two years, the Skyleaf King was still unable to obtain a single one of them.

Otherwise, even with the suppression from the sacred light, he still should have made significant advancement in his cultivation through consuming the precious medicinal herbs in the room.

If I wish to obtain the medicinal herbs, it will need to be in my body.

Thus, Zhang Xuan swiftly drew his physical body out from the Myriad Anthive Nest before returning his soul to it.

He stretched his stiffened body for a while before turning his gaze toward the medicinal herbs and books around him.

Most of the books detailed the various methods of how one could achieve a breakthrough to Saint realm. He had already collected many of those and compiled a correct version of the Saint Ascension Decipher, so there was no need for him to collect any more of them.

Saint Void Heart Grass, Heavenly Dragon Flower, Woodscent Stalk... While these medicinal herbs aren't particularly high-tiered, they possess the ability to induce a metamorphosis of one's soul and physical body, thus making them ideal medicinal herbs to push for a breakthrough to Saint realm.

After a swift scan around the chamber, Zhang Xuan nodded.

The medicinal herbs within the room were all useful in one way or another in achieving a breakthrough to Saint realm. It was probably with the differing needs that different cultivators would have when attempting a breakthrough in mind that Kong shi prepared an entire room of medicinal herbs within the Saint Ascension Hall.

Soon, a certain medicinal herb appeared in Zhang Xuan's sight.

As expected, there's indeed the Grand Intermittence Grass here!

The Grand Intermittence Grass could nourish a person's vitality. If paired with suitable medicinal herbs, it could metamorphose a cultivator's physical body into the flesh of a true Saint. That being said, it would be rather extravagant for one to use such a precious medicinal herb for a breakthrough to Saint realm.

I should quickly take it first.

With a swift movement, Zhang Xuan's hand reached for the seal to grab the medicinal herb.

Weng!

As soon as his hand came into contact with the seal, he immediately felt a powerful force pushing him back, stopping his hand from stretching any further in.

If he could not touch the Grand Intermittence Grass, he would be unable to store it within his storage ring. If so, he would have made a wasted trip.

Humph, I don't believe that I can't overcome a mere seal!

Seeing that the seal only served the purpose of hindering his movements, Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly as he increased his strength, causing his muscles tighten.

Geji! Geji!

The seal dented inwards like a crushed ball, and the deeper the dent, the greater the resistance Zhang Xuan felt.

That's weird...

Despite increasing the strength exerted several times, such that his zhenqi and physical strength were already pushed to their limits, he was still unable to touch the Grand Intermittence Grass. Frowning, Zhang Xuan was just about to retract his arm and try again when he realized that the seal had bound itself tightly to his arm like glue. No matter how he struggled, he could not free himself from it.

What a bizarre formation...

Zhang Xuan did not know whether he should cry or laugh in this situation.

Other formations were dangerous and lethal, but this seal... when he tried to push his arm in, it tried its hardest to keep him out. Yet, when he tried to retract his arm, it ended up sticking onto him, not allowing him to leave. Given the current situation, it seemed like he would be trapped until he successfully retrieved the Grand Intermittence Grass.

Soul!

Since his zhenqi and physical body were not sufficient for him to reach the medicinal herbs, he had no choice but to drive his soul energy as well.

Weng!

As Zhang Xuan further increased the force he exerted, energy ripples spread across the seal as it gradually grew more and more dented.

Zhang Xuan's zhenqi cultivation had reached Nascent Saint pinnacle, his physical body had achieved the Fifth Incandescence of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, and his soul had reached Nascent Saint pinnacle as well after being nourished by the Lightning Elemental Orb. With the three powerful sources of strength stacking upon one another, not even a Saint 3-dan expert would be able to stand their ground against him.

Jiya!

Go in!

Due to Zhang Xuan driving his zhenqi too quickly, steam was rising from his head.

There was a brief standstill between Zhang Xuan's hand and the seal as the both sides depleted the strength of one another. Eventually, after two minutes, Zhang Xuan's hand finally overcame the seal and touched the leaf of the Grand Intermittence Grass within.

Hu!

He swiftly stowed it into his storage ring.

Huala!

As soon as the medicinal herb was stored into his storage ring, a loud popping sound echoed from the seal as it abruptly vanished from sight.

It was as if the seal had become worthless with the disappearance of the medicinal herb inside, so it chose to dissipate of its own accord.

While Kong shi has left behind a huge collection of medicinal herbs for the later

generations, it seems like he has set up a trial around them so that they would only be used by those who are qualified. Without sufficient strength, it's impossible for one to retrieve the medicinal herbs.

If I'm not mistaken, the seal automatically adjusts its durability according to the cultivation realm of the person attempting to retrieve medicinal herb, so it would be nigh impossible for cultivators who are beneath or beyond Nascent Saint to obtain it. This serves as a measure to ensure that the medicinal herbs would be used for breakthroughs to Saint realm, as well as to ensure that the Nascent Saint cultivator retrieving and using the medicinal herb is qualified to be conferred as a Celestial Saint! Zhang Xuan thought as he wiped away the sweat on his forehead.

As expected of the World's Teacher, he sure had everything well thought out.

It seemed like Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing were unaware of this matter, which resulted in them attributing the Skyleaf King's rise in strength to the medicinal herbs.

Speaking of which, the Skyleaf King sure was pitiable. Despite having so many valuable medicinal herbs around him, he was not able to obtain even a single one of them.

It would be good to obtain all of these medicinal herbs, but... it's simply too difficult to draw them out. It'd be best for me to leave with just the Grand Intermittence Grass for the time being. Otherwise, once the Skyleaf King returns, I'll be in deep trouble, Zhang Xuan thought as he exhaled a mouthful of turbid gas.

Of course, it would be for the best if he could obtain all of the medicinal herbs in the room, but that would be extremely dangerous as well. He dared not imagine what would happen if the Skyleaf King were to return while he was in the midst of retrieving one of the medicinal herbs.

Thus, Zhang Xuan turned around, and just as he was about to leave the room, his eyes suddenly fell upon a certain peculiar object.

It was a gel-like fluid that emanated a radiance of seven colors. Flowing slowly within the seal that it cased in, it exuded a peculiar aura that seemed to draw him in.

T-this... Could it be... Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence? Zhang Xuan's breathing hastened as his entire body stiffened in shock.

His Saint Ascension Decipher required one last artifact for him to achieve a

breakthrough from Nascent Saint to Saint realm, and that was the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence.

After browsing through innumerable records, he had learned that the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence only sprouted in the very depths of the earth veins, making it an extremely rare commodity, such that even the author of the book had not seen it before. As such, there were no descriptions on the artifact in the book.

Even so, he felt a peculiar feeling of intimacy to the seven-colored fluid. Furthermore, considering that it had been left behind by Kong shi himself... Without a doubt, it was definitely the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence!

With this, I should have no trouble becoming a Celestial Saint... Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

Without any hesitation, he dashed forward and reached his hand into the seal.

This was an artifact that he had to obtain regardless of the cost. He had already been at Nascent Saint pinnacle ever since he left the Subterranean Gallery, and it had been a long time since then.

As long as he could assimilate the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence, he would finally be able to reach Saint realm!

Geji! Geji!

Driving his zhenqi, physical strength, and soul energy to their limits, the seal casing the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence immediately dented inwards.

"Humph, for pesky rats, you sure scrambled fast! Zhang Xuan, you'd better pray that you don't meet me ever again, or else I will tear you apart into innumerable shreds..."

Just as Zhang Xuan was in the midst of pushing his hand into the seal to obtain the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence, a cold harrumph abruptly sounded outside. Following which, a towering figure walked into the chamber.

The Skyleaf King.

He pushed open the door while mumbling furiously beneath his breath. As soon as he got into the room, he immediately noticed that something was amiss. Scanning the

room swiftly, he found a hand plunged right into one of the seals, and attached to the hand was a young man who was trying his best to struggle free.

"You..."

Many emotions flickered across the Skyleaf King's face. From the initial bewilderment, it slowly warped into shock before eventually turning into rage. Clenching his fists tightly, he was just about to rush forward to make a move when the young man suddenly raised his free hand and waved.

"Yo!"

Chapter 1078

Pose, and You Will Be Struck by Lightning

Actually, Zhang Xuan was also having a mental breakdown at that very moment.

He had not thought that the Skyleaf King would walk in on him.

With his hand trapped within the seal, he could not leave even if he wanted to. It was truly an indescribably awkward situation.

"Yo?" Hearing the other party's bizarre greeting, the Skyleaf King was taken aback.

Upon seeing him, not only did the other party not flee from fright, he was even speaking some kind of weird language to him. The sheer ridiculousness of the situation left him slightly dazed. However, it took only a blink of an eye for him to recover from it. "You are trapped within the seal? Hahaha! It seems like even the heavens are on my side!"

Not only did that fellow foil his plan, the fellow had even humiliated him, the first King of the Qingtian Lineage! Ever since then, he had been wanting to exact vengeance.

He had thought that the other party would surely coop himself up in the small room like the other pesky master teachers, and if that was the case, there would truly have been nothing that he would have been able to do. However, who would have thought that the other party would be so foolish as to wander right into his base!

He truly must have been eager to seek death!

He had studied the seals for two whole years, and he knew that once a hand touched the seal, it would be impossible to extract it unless one were to obtain the artifact within it. Judging from the other party's current state, he must have been trying to retrieve something but got stuck in the midst of doing so.

"Hahaha! Since you are already here, why don't you just remain here for good!" With his eyes glowing in excitement, the Skyleaf King reached out to grab Zhang Xuan.

But before his hand could reach the other party, the young man suddenly spoke up. "Hold it a moment..."

"Why? Are you going to plead for mercy now? Let me tell you this straight, it's too late for that!" Knowing how scheming the young man before him was, the Skyleaf King formed a massive palm with zhenqi and directed it straight toward the other party.

As a Saint 5-dan Leaving Aperture realm expert, he wielded astounding strength. Even with the combined prowess of Guild Leader Han and Wu shi, they would still be beaten into a lump of meat before the palm strike, let alone Zhang Xuan.

"Plead for mercy? You must be joking! Do you think that I'll plead for mercy with a lowly figure like you? Do you know who I am?" Zhang Xuan looked at the Skyleaf King fearlessly as an aura of majesty flowed from him.

"Who are you? You are the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the only one in history to have received the recognition of everyone within the academy. As long as I devour you whole, I will surely be able to achieve a breakthrough in my cultivation and escape from this darned place!" the Skyleaf King roared furiously as a savage glint flashed across his eyes.

Otherworldly Demons were able to raise their cultivation through devouring the flesh of master teachers. Back then, Vicious' phalange 1 had fed off the bodies of the master teachers that the beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge had offered him, and through doing so, he was able to regain his strength and regrow his flesh.

The higher ranked and more talented a master teacher was, the more an Otherworldly Demon's cultivation would grow by consuming him. For a very long time now, the Skyleaf King had been wanting to kill Zhang Xuan and devour him. Since Zhang Xuan had trapped himself within his base, how could he possibly allow this delicious prey to escape from him?

"Audacious!" Zhang Xuan's face darkened. Driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he swiftly converted it into the chilling Zhenqi of Slaughter unique to Otherworldly Demons. Within the blink of an eye, a powerful aura burst into the surroundings. "I am..."

Pilipala!

Before Zhang Xuan could finish speaking, a powerful current of electricity abruptly ran through the hand that was trapped in the seal.

In just a brief moment, his entire body was charred black from the powerful lightning current. His entire body stiffened under the electrocution, and his hair also stood up from the lingering static electricity.

If not for his body having achieved durability comparable to a Saint low-tier artifact, he might have just died then and there.

Zhang Xuan's eyes flew around the place, and he nearly burst into tears.

All he wanted to do was pose for a bit so as to fool the Skyleaf King, was it really that big a crime? To actually be electrocuted over such a small matter...

As stifled as Zhang Xuan felt, he swiftly understood what was going on.

Just as he had guessed previously, Otherworldly Demons were indeed unable to retrieve the artifacts within!

The moment he converted his Heaven's Path zhenqi into Zhenqi of Slaughter, the seal assumed that an Otherworldly Demon was attempting to breach its defenses, so it immediately sent a powerful electric shock over. It was fortunate that Zhang Xuan had converted his zhenqi back as soon as he noticed that something was amiss, or else even his Saint low-tier body would not have been strong enough to survive a sustained electric shock of that intensity.

How embarrassing it would have been if he had die from an electricity shock while he was in the midst of posing!

"You..."

The Skyleaf King was just about to make a move when he suddenly saw Zhang Xuan being charred black before his eyes, and he froze in shock.

For an instant, he vividly felt a killing intent being emanated from the young man before him. It was weak, but it was even purer than his own. Furthermore, he was even electrocuted by the seal on top of that. Could it be that... the young man before him was not a master teacher but one of their tribesmen?

"Cough cough, you should know my identity now, right?" Exhaling a mouthful of white smoke, Zhang Xuan turned to the Skyleaf King and spoke confidently.

"You are also an Otherworldly Demon as well?" The Skyleaf King frowned for a moment before a glint flickered in his eyes. "No, that's not right. You are a master teacher. How could a person who has received the acknowledgement of so many master teachers possibly be an Otherworldly Demon? Ah! You must have killed the Scarletleaf King and the others and drawn the Zhenqi of Slaughter from their bodies through some secret art. Do you think that you can beguile me through a cheap ploy like that? Dream on!"

Boom!

The Skyleaf King immediately gathered his strength once more and launched a palm strike against Zhang Xuan.

It was not without reason that he had managed to surpass innumerable Otherworldly Demons to become the number one expert of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings. He was indeed not as easily fooled as the other Kings.

While the Zhenqi of Slaughter was unique to the Otherworldly Demons, it was not entirely impossible for the fellow before him to have extracted the Zhenqi of Slaughter from the other Kings and stored it within his body so as to disguise himself as their tribesman.

Back then, a certain master teacher had used such a method to deal a crushing blow to them.

"You said that I killed the Scarletleaf King? Hahaha! You were fooled by that as well? That was just a ploy that I used to fool them. Take a look at who is this..." Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a figure appeared beside him.

The fellow had a towering stature and a powerful body. Upon seeing the Skyleaf King, the fellow smiled and said, "It's me..."

He was the Scarletleaf King!

"You aren't dead yet?"

Seeing how the young man trapped in the formation had dragged out a living Scarletleaf King, who should have been ripped into pieces within a grade-7 pinnacle Slaughter Formation, the Skyleaf King found himself completely lost for the first time.

What was going on?

Back then, even though his fragmented Primordial Spirit had suffered a heavy blow, he did not leave the premises immediately. With his own eyes, he had watched the Scarletleaf King being tricked by the young man, and trapped within the formation that he constructed himself, he was torn into innumerable pieces. How in the world... did he come back to life?

"No, something is wrong. The Zhenqi of Slaughter within your body does not belong to the Scarletleaf King. Furthermore, your cultivation... isn't right either..."

After a moment of bewilderment, the Skyleaf King swiftly found a few points that were off about the 'Scarletleaf King' before his eyes.

The 'Scarletleaf King' before him did harness Zhenqi of Slaughter as well, but it had an ancient quality to it. This was at odds with the cultivation technique practiced by the Scarletleaf King.

More importantly... there was a significant difference in their cultivation as well. The 'Scarletleaf King' before him was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle, not having even reached Saint realm yet.

One should know that the Scarletleaf King was a true Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert!

"In order to fool those master teachers, I had no choice but to take a fatal blow. As a result, my cultivation ended up suffering a temporary decline. Well, if you still don't believe me, surely you should recognize this guy, right?" the frowning 'Scarletleaf King' explained.

There was a momentary blur before the Skyleaf King's eyes, and another figure abruptly materialized in the chamber. It was the missing Violetleaf King.

"Paying respects to the Skyleaf King!" The Violetleaf King hurriedly clasped his fist and bowed deeply.

The frown on the Skyleaf King's face deepened.

There was nothing wrong with the Violetleaf King before his eyes. The other party's cultivation realm and aura were exactly how he remembered them to be.

For both the Scarletleaf King and the Violetleaf King to be with him... could Zhang Xuan really be one of their tribesmen?

While it looked as if he had killed the Ten Great Kings on the surface, he was, in fact, saving them all?

Recalling the incident from before, the Skyleaf King asked doubtfully, "No, that's not right either. If you are truly one of our tribesmen, why would you reveal my hidden identity to those master teachers?"

His fragmented Primordial Spirit had been hiding within Jiang Yuan all along, and with his secret art, no one would have noticed him. Yet, the other party forced him out of Jiang Yuan's body and put him through great suffering!

If the other party was truly an Otherworldly Demon, why would the other party have betrayed him?

Not even Feng Xun, Jiang Yuan's close companion, had noticed the anomaly!

"It was all to obtain the trust of those foolish master teachers so that I could obtain the map!" Zhang Xuan replied with a leisurely wave of his hand.

However, as his entire body was still charred from the previous electrocution, his 'leisurely' movement looked sinister instead.

"You have obtained the map from them?" The Skyleaf King was taken aback.

"Indeed. It's in my hands right now!" Zhang Xuan nodded, and he flicked his wrist. A map appeared in his hand.

"It really is the map..." Feeling the unique aura that emanated from the ancient goatskin resonating with the entire Qiu Wu Palace, the eyes of the Skyleaf King lit up.

The map had a distinctive quality reminiscent to the booklet that contained the introduction to the ancient domain. There was no doubt about it, it was the real map!

The Skyleaf King reached out to take the map in agitation. "Can you let me take a look?"

Hu!

With another flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan returned the map into his storage ring and shook his head. "With this, you should know who I am, right?"

"This..." Seeing Zhang Xuan keeping the map, the Skyleaf King was stunned for a moment before asking with a deep frown, "Who in the world are you?"

All of the evidence suggested that the young man before him was an Otherworldly Demon, but... he did not know of any figure within the Qingtian Lineage who possessed such pure Zhenqi of Slaughter.

Zhang Xuan waved his hand. "It's not convenient for me to tell you who I am at the moment. You just have to know that the Qingtian Emperor dispatched me to assist you in this mission."

"His Majesty sent you here to assist me?" the Skyleaf King assessed the fellow before him once more.

The zhenqi in his body felt upright, and the faint air of a master teacher lingered around him. No matter how he looked at the fellow before him, the other party did not seem to have anything to do with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

"Indeed. Alright, I will have to obtain this artifact now, so stand back a moment. I will talk to you once I'm done..." Seeing that he had finally convinced the Skyleaf King a little, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he pushed his other hand further in to touch the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence.

"Obtain the artifact?" The Skyleaf King was stunned for a moment before a ferocious glint flashed through his eyes. "Do you think that you can fool me with your cheap acting? Tell me, who are you?"

"Fool you? Why would you think that I'm trying to fool you?" Seeing how the other party was still reluctant to believe his words, Zhang Xuan felt a little headache.

If it had been any of the other Kings, they would have been sold by now. Yet, the Skyleaf King just would not believe him despite all of the evidences he had produced. Wasn't he being a little too skeptical?

"I have no way of ascertaining who you truly are, but the seal that Kong shi left behind is surely able to do so! If our Otherworldly Demonic Tribe truly had a way to bypass Kong shi's detection, we wouldn't have been in vulnerable position all along." Sneering

coldly, the Skyleaf King gathered his zhenqi within his palm once more, ready to make a move.

The fact that the fellow was only electrocuted once while his hand was stuck within the seal was conclusive evidence that the other party wasn't an Otherworldly Demon at his core. Without a doubt, he was a fake!

"You..." Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan immediately panicked.

"Exposed, huh? Regardless of whether you are truly a human or an Otherworldly Demon, you won't be getting out of here alive today!" With a cold sneer, the Skyleaf King raised his palm to bring it down upon Zhang Xuan.

At that moment, however, he suddenly felt a splitting pain cutting into his head.

Peng!

His head abruptly burst apart, and his body was sent crashing into a nearby wall before collapsing back to the ground as if a lump of mud.

The 'Scarletleaf King' slapped his hand as the muscles throughout his body warped back into Zhang Xuan's appearance.

"I told you from the start, we could have just killed him with a single punch. There was no need to waste your breath. You sure like to create more trouble for yourself, don't you?"

Chapter 1079

What Are Those Things?

Naturally, the 'Scarletleaf King' was Zhang Xuan's clone.

His clone and he were mentally connected, so they could easily transmit their thoughts to one another.

Earlier, in order to fool the Skyleaf King, Zhang Xuan had instructed the other party to morph into the Scarletleaf King's form.

As his clone cultivated a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was unable to fully disguise his zhenqi to that of the Scarletleaf King nor conceal his level of cultivation perfectly, thus resulting in the Skyleaf King seeing through his clone's disguise easily.

Back then, his clone had said that they shouldn't waste their time with the Skyleaf King, and they should just end him with a single punch. However, Zhang Xuan felt that there was too huge of a disparity between their strength, so it was best for them not to move recklessly.

Even so, his clone still ended up striking the Skyleaf King anyway. It was truly fortunate that the Skyleaf King hadn't really thought that anyone would be so brazen as to attempt an assault on him, and his clone also moved at a speed beyond the Skyleaf King's expectations, so... the Skyleaf King ended up being struck in the head and died just after a single punch.

Upon seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but fall in a daze.

The Skyleaf King's strength was centered on his Primordial Spirit, making his physical body significantly weaker in comparison, but nevertheless, he was still a Leaving Aperture realm expert. With his body reinforced by his powerful zhenqi, it would be difficult for anyone wielding strength beneath Saint 4-dan to inflict harm to him, even with a successful surprise attack.

Yet, his clone actually managed to destroy the other party's head with a single punch.

That was far beyond the might that he harnessed within his physical body, zhenqi, and soul combined!

If he were to challenge his clone in his current state, there was no doubt that he would be utterly destroyed!

Was that fellow really still his clone?

To think that his rate of cultivation and fighting prowess would end up being so far beneath his own clone... At this rate, he dared not claim that he was a genius anymore.

"How did you become so strong?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask.

The gap was between them wasn't that huge previously. At the very least, he was still able to stand his ground against his clone to some degree in the past. But if he were to clash with his clone once more in the latter's current strength... just the thought of it sent shivers down his spine!

Could it be that his rate of cultivation was actually really slow?

"You gave me the Lightning Elemental Orb not too long ago. I thought that it was quite useful, so I absorbed it a little..." his clone began explaining with a proud look on his face when a loud explosion suddenly sounded from behind. Following which, a furious roar echoed resoundingly within the chamber.

"Shit, the Skyleaf King is a Leaving Aperture realm expert! Even with his physical body destroyed, his Primordial Spirit would still be intact..." Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled the distinctive traits of Leaving Aperture realm cultivators, and his eyes widened in horror.

Leaving Aperture realm cultivators were capable of drawing their Primordial Spirits from their physical bodies and operate independently from it. Even if their physical bodies were to be destroyed, it wouldn't affect their fighting prowess by much.

Since the Skyleaf King was a true Leaving Aperture realm expert, the same applied to him as well. In other words, they weren't out of danger yet. If anything, they were in greater danger than before.

While Zhang Xuan was speaking with his clone, his hand hadn't been idling about. Noticing the urgency of the situation, he immediately drove his zhenqi, physical

strength, and soul energy to the maximum, such that he could feel a sharp pain acting on his meridians and muscles as they were pushed to the verge of tearing apart.

Kacha!

The seal dented deeper and deeper inwards, and eventually, Zhang Xuan's finger finally came into contact with the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence. He quickly kept it into his storage ring.

Hu!

The seal swiftly dissipated, freeing his hand.

"I will kill you!"

Hulala!

Along with a furious roar, a Primordial Spirit flew over with reddened eyes. Even without making a move, just the pressure it was exerting already left one feeling as if the world was being torn apart.

"Strong..." Zhang Xuan's heart turned cold.

Even though he had encountered and even fought with a handful of Primordial Spirits in the past, none of them could begin to compare up with the one standing before him at this very moment. If the Primordial Spirit of the Jadeleaf King could be said to be a ferocious cat, the Skyleaf King would definitely have to be a ferocious tiger.

They weren't even at the same level!

Just by the pressure itself, he could already tell that even with ten of him combined, he still wouldn't be a match to the other party.

"That fellow really only knows how to cause trouble, I should never let him out again... If he hadn't destroyed the Skyleaf King's head, I might still be able to stall for some time. But this... What should I do..." With his life hanging on a thin thread, Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered with anything else anymore. He swiftly rushed for the exit as he cursed his clone in his mind.

Had his clone not acted so recklessly and destroyed the Skyleaf King's head, the

Skyleaf King also wouldn't have gotten so furious.

He had only barely managed to flee from the seal, but at this rate, it wouldn't be long before he was captured by the Skyleaf King once more.

"Clone, you were the one who caused this trouble. You should take responsibility and fend him off..." Zhang Xuan bellowed furiously, but before he could finish his words, he suddenly saw something that caused his eyebrows to shoot up, "Hey, don't go! Wait a moment..."

With a speed even faster than him, his clone had already dashed out of the room, leaving only his back visible to him.

Who could have thought that his clone would actually be so disloyal, fleeing at a speed even faster than him? Zhang Xuan nearly died from sheer anger on the spot.

He had known all along that his clone was not a reliable teammate, but he had never thought that it would be to such an extent...

However, this wasn't a moment to dwell about the matter. Knowing that he would die if the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit were to catch up with him, he quickly flicked his wrist, and the Lightning Elemental Orb appeared in his palm.

That was currently the strongest trump card he had at the moment. As long as he could activate it, he would be able to generate a field of lightning, which could possibly stall the Skyleaf King for some time, thus opening a small window for him to escape. That being said, it was nigh impossible for him to activate the Lightning Elemental Orb given his current level of cultivation, but considering the current circumstances, he had no other choice but to give it a try.

"Lightning..." Grabbing the orb tightly, Zhang Xuan infused zhenqi into it furiously. Halfway through his words, a loud 'kacha!' sounded, and the orb was reduced to dust.

"..." Zhang Xuan was speechless.

He was still thinking how his clone had gotten so powerful within such a short period of time... It turned out that he had fully absorbed the lightning harnessed within the Lightning Elemental Orb dry, emptying out the precious artifact!

"Damn it..."

Realizing that he had lost his greatest trump card, Zhang Xuan was on the verge of tears. Watching as how the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit was swiftly catching up to him, he felt despaired. He was just about to give himself up to death's embrace when he suddenly felt a burst of wind rushing past him.

He turned around to take a look, and to his shock, the Skyleaf King had ran straight past him, as if the other party hadn't seen him at all.

"Ah?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

As a large figure standing in the middle of the room, there was no way that the Skyleaf King would have missed him. So... why did the Skyleaf King run straight past him?

Nevertheless, since the Skyleaf King had chosen to overlook him, Zhang Xuan grasped the opportunity and swiftly kept the Violetleaf King back into the Myriad Anthive Nest before rushing out of the chamber.

Stepping out of the chamber, he saw his clone facing the Skyleaf King with a mocking look on his face not too far away. His clone wagged his finger provocatively while speaking in a resounding voice, "If you really think that you can defeat me, come at me then!"

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

"Could it be that... after absorbing the Lightning Elemental Orb, my clone's cultivation has already reached Leaving Aperture realm and could defeat the Skyleaf King? If that's the case, I won't need to escape anymore..."

Zhang Xuan had thought that his clone was being disloyal for running away, but it turned out that the other party was actually luring the Skyleaf King out to face the latter one on one...

From the looks of it, his clone seemed to have gained the ability to defeat the Skyleaf King face on. There was no need for him to worry anymore.

"You're courting death..." the Skyleaf King roared as he flung a fist forward furiously.

The clone also swiftly retaliated with a punch of his own.

"My clone is actually facing the Skyleaf King head on?" Seeing how his clone was

valiantly charging at the Skyleaf King, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He opened his eyes wide to see who would emerge victorious from the clash, only to see that before his clone's fist could even come close to connecting with the Skyleaf King, the Skyleaf King's fist had already fallen on his head.

Padah!

His clone's head was knocked flat.

Pu!

Zhang Xuan's eyes nearly fell out of their sockets, and he almost blacked out on the spot.

Aren't you supposed to be powerful?

To be destroyed within just a single blow... Where in the world did you find the courage to behave so arrogantly before the Skyleaf King?

"He is intentionally luring the other party so that I can escape..." Zhang Xuan was dazed for a moment before realization came to him, and he couldn't help but feel a little moved. Despite how his clone usually acted, it seemed like he was still a trustworthy ally during crucial moments!

Deciding not to waste the other party's selfless sacrifice, he quickly dashed away.

Reanalyzing the situation, while his clone's fighting prowess had increased significantly after absorbing the energy within the Lightning Elemental Orb, he was still far from matching the Skyleaf King. The only reason why his clone had challenged the Skyleaf King so arrogantly to his face was so as to vie some time for him to get away.

What a noble clone!

At this moment, Zhang Xuan felt deeply embarrassed that he misunderstood the kind intentions of the other party...

With reddened eyes, he swiftly dashed back towards the room where Wu shi and the others were at. Barely after he took three steps, a figure with a flattened head abruptly sprinted past him while shouting, "Main body, you will have to deal with him yourself,

I am not a match for him... Also, Skyleaf King, you should stop pursuing me. He's the real Zhang Xuan, I am only a clone..."

"..." Zhang Xuan's body shook as he spurted blood.

So, in the end, the fellow was just trying to posture but it ended in a failure...

Zhang Xuan swiftly took a glance behind him and saw that the Skyleaf King was looking at him with reddened eyes.

"Don't come for me, he's the real Zhang Xuan, I am just a clone... When have you seen a clone escaping faster than the main body?" Zhang Xuan immediately backed away fearfully.

"I will kill you first before killing him..." With a look of savagery, the Skyleaf King roared angrily as he rushed towards Zhang Xuan.

Huala!

An incredible might tore through the air, but surprisingly enough, despite standing before such devastating might, Zhang Xuan didn't show the slightest hint of panic. Instead, his lips curled up into a faint smile.

"You want to kill me? Give it your best shot then!" the young man replied calmly as he stomped his feet on the ground.

Weng!

With a loud buzz, the formations that were set up around the chamber came to life. In the blink of an eye, a dense layer of mist shrouded the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit.

Zhang Xuan had already examined the formation closely when he first arrived, and with his clone's help, they were able to successfully lure the Skyleaf King into the formation and trap him within it.

"He's the one who had set up the formation, so there's no way the formation can kill or trap him for too long. Let's go!"

While Zhang Xuan was able to activate the formation to trap the Skyleaf King temporarily, given the Skyleaf King's deep understanding of those formations, it would

be nigh impossible for him to kill the other party through it. Thus, he chose to make use of this opportunity to swiftly return back to where Wu shi and the others were instead.

"I will kill you!"

Geji! Geji!

Shortly after Zhang Xuan left the formation, a series of loud explosions sounded behind him. The formations trapping the Skyleaf King had been torn into pieces.

Those grade-7 pinnacle formations could easily trap Vice Principal Ji Yan and the others, but against the Leaving Aperture realm Skyleaf King who commanded a thorough understanding of them, it could only barely last for a few moments.

On top of that, the formations required a person of sufficient strength to drive it in order to draw out its true strength, but Zhang Xuan's Nascent Saint pinnacle cultivation wasn't insufficient for him to drive a grade-7 pinnacle formation properly.

"Run!"

With the formations being torn apart, Zhang Xuan knew that he would be killed if the Skyleaf King caught with up. Thus, he pushed his body to its limits and dashed forward as fast as he could.

...

"What an incredible pulsation of energy... This is bad. The Skyleaf King must have noticed Principal Zhang, and the both of them have started fighting with one another!"

The crowd, who were resting within the small room, felt an intense disturbance in the surrounding spiritual energy, and their eyes narrowed in alarm.

"Let's go out to take a look..." Wu shi said anxiously before taking the lead to head outside.

The others quickly followed suit, and not too long after leaving the room, they saw a monster with a flattened sheet dangling on his neck sprinting over. Behind him was a person whose entire body was charred black and hair was standing on end.

"What are those things?"

The crowd was horrified.

Chapter 1080

I Want to Become a Celestial Saint!

Due to the huge commotion outside, everyone thought that the Skyleaf King had noticed Zhang Xuan and a battle had broken out among them.

Yet, when they headed out, they found two monsters running in their direction instead. What was going on?

Weren't they the only ones in the Saint Ascension Hall?

"Wait... No, those are not monsters. Take a closer look, the charred man behind is Principal Zhang!" Guild Leader Han suddenly noticed something, and he gulped subconsciously. "Look at his clothes, they are identical with Principal Zhang's. It's just that... he seems to have been struck by lightning?"

"You're right, he's Principal Zhang! But if that's the case... who's the flat-faced fellow in front?" Wu shi asked in bewilderment.

The fellow with the flattened face in front was dressed in the same clothes as Principal Zhang, and their figures were identical as well. But... surely a person whose face had been crushed flat should have died, so how could he still be running about?

Not to mention, the speed he was running at was astounding at that! Even Principal Zhang was unable to keep up with him...

"I will kill you all..."

Just as Guild Leader Han and Wu shi were perplexed by the bizarre situation, a towering Primordial Spirit suddenly appeared around the bend behind the duo. While chasing the duo, the Primordial Spirit was launching attack after attack, causing huge palm prints to appear on the ground amid intense tremors.

"That's the Skyleaf King? He has drawn out his Primordial Spirit? This is really bad; we must quickly move to save them!"

Upon seeing this sight, Wu shi and the others did not have the luxury of time to slowly figure out who the duo was anymore. They quickly drew their weapons and rushed forward to save them.

Huala!

"Rise!"

Along with Wu shi's bellow, the swords in everyone's hand gathered together to form a grand rain of swords directed toward the Skyleaf King.

"How dare you hinder my path? Scram, or else I'll claim your lives!" Roaring frenziedly, the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit burst forth to deflect the rain of swords with a powerful slap.

Deng deng deng deng!

The incredible might of the Skyleaf King's slap caused Wu shi and the others to retreat eight steps. That single strike had left their zhenqi running in disarray, and their faces paled from the impact.

Even before the Skyleaf King had drawn out his soul, they were already no match for him. Given that the Skyleaf King had gone on a rampage, drawing out his Primordial Spirit to face them, they stood even less of a chance.

Nevertheless, even though their attack did nothing to injure the Skyleaf King, they did succeed in slowing down the Skyleaf King's advancement, thus buying Zhang Xuan and his clone sufficient time to reach them.

"Quick, get back into the formation..." Knowing that the crowd could very well lose their lives if they were to clash with the Skyleaf King, Zhang Xuan hurriedly shouted as he continued rushing toward the formation.

The crowd also knew that they did not stand a chance against the Skyleaf King with their current strength either, so they hurriedly stepped back into the formation.

The moment Zhang Xuan managed to reach the formation, he heaved a huge sigh of relief. Turning his gaze to the figure with a flattened face not too far away, his eyebrows shot up in displeasure.

If not for the fact that he did not stand a chance against his clone, he would have taught the latter a lesson.

In the first place, his clone was the one who had acted recklessly and landed both of them in trouble. Despite that, not only did his clone not offer himself to save him, the main body, he even fled faster than him.

"You should return back to the Anthive Nest first; I will settle this with you later..." Knowing that this was not the time to be fussing over such matters, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and had his clone return to the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Weng!

Right after he did that, a light buzz sounded. Vice Principal Ji Yan had already successfully activated the formation, and a brilliant light shrouded the area.

They had set up this formation in order to fend off the Skyleaf King's assault, and after numerous uses over the past two years, they were already very familiar with it. As such, they were able to activate it instantaneously.

Being blocked outside the formation, the Skyleaf King furiously roared, "Damn you! Damn all of you..."

Shortly after, the crowd heard a loud thud on the formation. An intense force reverberated through the formation, threatening to shatter it apart.

"We won't last long at this rate."

After several strikes from the Skyleaf King, the face of the one driving the formation, Vice Principal Ji Yan, blanched, and cold sweat trickled down his forehead.

It was not like the Skyleaf King had never attempted to breach the defenses of their formation before, but this was the first time he had launched such frenzied attacks. If it continued, it was just a matter of time before the formation broke apart.

"There are only the few of us around here, so originally, the Skyleaf King wouldn't kill us before finding a path to escape. After all, the chances of finding a plausible escape path are greater if there are more of us around. For him to suddenly go into a rampage... Zhang shi, just what did you do?" Vice Principal Tan Qing frowned as he turned his gaze toward the charred young man not too far away.

Just how in the world did he manage to provoke the Skyleaf King into drawing out his Primordial Soul and rushing at them as if he had gone berserk?

"I... All I did was destroy his body," Zhang Xuan replied awkwardly.

His clone could hide back in the Myriad Anthive Nest after causing so much trouble, but he couldn't do the same. In the end, he was the one who had to clean up the mess made by the other party. The more he thought about it, the more exasperated he felt.

"Destroy his body?"

"You mean... you killed his physical body?"

Everyone was stunned.

They were still thinking that it was ridiculous for the Skyleaf King to go so far as to chase Zhang Xuan in his Primordial Spirit just because he had stolen a stalk of Grand Intermittence Grass from him. But who would have thought that Zhang Xuan actually destroyed the other party's physical body!

Leaving Aperture realm cultivators were capable of surviving as Primordial Spirits, but they would still have to take good care of their own body as it was the resting place for their Primordial Spirits, and it was also the foundation for them to further their cultivation. Given so, there was no one who wouldn't go into a frenzy after having their body destroyed!

"I also didn't notice it. It was an accident, really!" Seeing the horrified expressions on the faces around him, Zhang Xuan quickly explained himself.

If he had managed to stop his clone from acting so recklessly back then, they would not have been placed in such a desperate situation.

"Accident..."

Everyone's face reddened in frustration, and if they could, they would have really liked to give the fellow before them a good pummeling.

In the first place, it is already tough enough for a Nascent Saint cultivator like him to destroy the body of a Saint 5-dan expert... and he was saying that it was all an accident?

If that was the result of an accident, wouldn't the world be destroyed if he acted intentionally?

Taking a few deep breaths, Guild Leader Han suppressed the vexed emotions in his heart and spoke grimly. "Forget it, this isn't the time to be thinking about that. We have to find some way to stabilize the formation quickly, or else we might all lose our lives here..."

He was the head of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Formation Master Guild, and his comprehension of formations was extremely deep. He could tell that while the formation was still managing to keep the Skyleaf King at bay temporarily, the situation wouldn't last for too long at the current rate. To prevent that, all of them would have to devote their strength to reinforcing the formation together.

"Alright!" Knowing the urgency of the situation, the others quickly nodded.

"Wu shi, head to the Qian position and stand guard there. Luo shi, head to the Zhen position..." Guild Leader Han quickly distributed various roles among the group.

He had been studying the formation ever since he arrived at the room, so he had an idea of where the weaknesses of the formation were located. Noting that there was nothing wrong with Guild Leader Han's deployment, Zhang Xuan decided to just follow his instructions.

Hong long!

As everyone infused their zhenqi into the formation simultaneously, the formation seemed to have stabilized significantly, alleviating the tremors.

"Damn it..." Noting the changes in the formation, the Skyleaf King quickly realized that he wouldn't be able to breach the formation even if he exerted his full strength. Trembling with rage, he roared, "Since you wish to coop in your hole like tortoises, I will crush that statue!"

Hu!

Shortly after those words were shouted, everyone felt the immense pressure acting on them disappearing. It seemed the Skyleaf King had left.

"He has gone to deal with Principal Zhang Yinqiu! What do we do?" Stepping out of

the formation, the group realized that the Skyleaf King had indeed left. Realizing what the other party was going to do next, Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing could not help but panic.

Clearly, the statue referred to the old principal beside the Saint Ascension Platform.

The old principal's soul was currently sealed within the statue, so he could not flee even if he wanted to. Faced with the Skyleaf King, the only plausible fate for him was death!

Even though the old principal was currently trapped within a statue, he had consciousness and was capable of speaking. Surely they couldn't watch idly as their close comrade was killed by the Skyleaf King?

"What else can we do? We can only save him!" Wu shi replied gravely.

"But... there's no way we will be able to stop the Skyleaf King!" Vice Principal Tan Qing said worriedly.

The Skyleaf King was simply too powerful. Even with their might combined, they were still no match for the other party. If they were to rush over recklessly, not only would they be unable to save the old principal, their team might even be wiped out at that.

"I'm sorry, but I can't simply watch idly as a comrade dies right before my eyes. Even at the expense of my life, I want to at least try to save him. Master teachers never abandon their own brethren!" Wu shi clenched his fists in agitation.

"It goes without saying that we share the same feeling as well, but... what can we do?" Vice Principal Tan Qing shook his head and sighed deeply. "It was in order to save me that Principal Zhang Yinqiu landed himself in such a state. If we charge in recklessly and lose our life in the midst of saving him, we will only be undermining the sacrifice he made for us! He would surely blame us for acting foolishly!"

Having followed Zhang Yinqiu for many years, Vice Principal Tan Qing had a clear grasp of the other party's temperament and character.

Unmarried, Zhang Yinqiu had devoted his entirety to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy and his responsibilities as a master teacher. Even if they were to succeed in saving Zhang Yinqiu at the expense of their own lives, they would only make the other party guilt-ridden for being a liability to the team.

"Is there any way we will be able to defeat the Skyleaf King?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

"There is a way. As long as someone achieves a breakthrough on the Saint Ascension Platform, we will be able to call forth the energy within it and enter a temporary state of invincibility. With the temporary state of invincibility, we will be able to overwhelm the Skyleaf King easily!" Vice Principal Ji Yan said.

"Temporary state of invincibility?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Indeed. We have been studying the stone tablets on the first floor over the past two years, and according to the records left behind by Kong shi, if a cultivator successfully becomes a Celestial Saint, a burst of sacred light will descend from the sky. At the same time, the energy harnessed within the Saint Ascension Platform will be infused into the cultivator's body. As the energy harnesses the authority of the world, not even 9-star master teachers will be able to stand their ground before it!" Vice Principal Ji Yan replied.

In the two years that they were trapped in the area, other than pitting their strength and wits against the Skyleaf King, they had also been looking into how they could escape from the Saint Ascension Hall as well. As such, they had been looking around the area whenever they had chance to do so, and they had managed to find quite a few records that were related to the Saint Ascension Platform.

At this point, it seemed like there were only two solutions to escape from the Saint Ascension Hall. Firstly, obtain the heritage of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. Secondly, be conferred as a Celestial Saint on the Saint Ascension Platform.

The first solution was no longer feasible. The fragmented soul of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had already dissipated from being excessively traumatized, so there was no way they could obtain the heritage anymore. In other words, their only hope lay in the second solution.

"That's as good as not saying anything at all... Celestial Saint? How could it be that easy!" Wu shi shook his head.

Shortly after hearing those words, the young man stepped up, and with determination in his eyes, he said, "How about this? Let's head to the Saint Ascension Platform, and the rest of you will try to find ways to stall the Skyleaf King so as to prevent him from

laying his hands on the old principal. In the meantime, I will attempt to achieve a breakthrough to Celestial Saint on the Saint Ascension Platform!"

Since he had already obtained the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence, he was ready for a breakthrough to Saint realm!

With his powerful accumulation and deep comprehension of the Saint Ascension Decipher, there was at least an 80% chance that he could become a Celestial Saint!

At this moment, it seemed to be the only plausible way to stop the Skyleaf King and save the remaining soul of the old principal!

"Becoming a Celestial Saint is not as easy as you think it is. You really should drop the idea..." Seeing how the other party raised the topic once more, Vice Principal Ji Yan frowned in displeasure.

He had already told the other party about the matter previously, and it was only out of politeness that he had not hurled criticisms at him. And yet, the other party was going on about it once more.

Do you think that Celestial Saints are like cabbages in the market, available upon demand?

Stop overestimating yourself!

The displeased Vice Principal Ji Yan was just about to continue when the presence of the young man before him abruptly changed, and an inviolable aura abruptly burst forth from him.

Hong long!

That aura created a warm glow around the young man, portraying him as a deity.

"This... This is... Celestial Master Teacher?"

Upon sensing the aura, Vice Principal Ji Yan's criticisms were stifled in his throat. His eyes narrowed, and his body stiffened.

Chapter 1081

Exchange

It was previously said that the requirement to becoming a Celestial Saint was to be a Celestial Master Teacher.

But other than Kong shi, there was not a single person in the entire Master Teacher Continent who had managed to receive the acknowledgement of the heavens and become a Celestial Master Teacher. As such, they had always thought that it was all a pipe dream, a solution that could never come to be. Thus, when they felt the aura the young man before them was emanating, they fell into a daze.

Zhang shi was actually a... Celestial Master Teacher?

Vice Principal Ji Yan was not the only one who reacted in such a manner. Other than Luo Ruoxin, the remaining members of the group also had their mouths widened in shock, as if they had seen a ghost.

They knew that Zhang Xuan was a person who possessed unparalleled talent and outstanding leadership, but who would have thought that he was actually a real Celestial Master Teacher?

It was no wonder Ancient Sage Qiu Wu dissipated in shame!

His standing could be said to be on par with even Kong shi himself!

Retracting the aura around him, Zhang Xuan turned to Vice Principal Ji Yan and asked, "So, am I qualified to become a Celestial Saint?"

"O-of course!" Vice Principal Ji Yan hurriedly replied with quivering lips. At this point, how could he dare say no?

If even Celestial Master Teachers were unable to become Celestial Saints, it would be impossible for anyone else to do it.

Seeing that he had managed to convince everyone, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

"Let's move quickly then. Otherwise, once the Skyleaf King lays his hands on the old principal, it'll be too late for regrets."

If the group continued dawdling around due to their lack of confidence in his ability to become a Celestial Saint, the old principal would probably be dead before they could take any concrete action. With a life at stake, he could only reveal his identity so as to win them over.

Besides, once he became a Celestial Saint, the others were bound to learn about his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher as well. Since that was going to be the case, it made no difference whether he revealed it to them now or later.

And judging from the crowd's reaction, it seemed like he had made the right call as well.

"Alright, let's set off right now!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Alright!"

The crowd quickly made their way toward the roof of the Saint Ascension Hall once more.

The Saint Ascension Platform was not releasing any sacred light at the moment, so the Skyleaf King could access the area freely as they wished. They would have to make haste.

Hong long!

As soon as they arrived at the rooftop, they saw the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit grabbing the old principal's soul. The statue the latter was housed in before had already been reduced to fragments.

Upon seeing the crowd, the old principal immediately exclaimed anxiously, "Don't come over, I am already a dead man. There's no need for you to make unnecessary sacrifices for me."

Even though he had never cultivated soul arts before, his soul was still able to stabilize significantly due to the sustained nourishment from the sacred light over time. As such, the destruction of the statue did not dissipate his soul instantaneously.

"Shut up!" With a tap of the Skyleaf King's finger, the old principal's voice immediately vanished. With a cold gaze in his eyes, the Skyleaf King turned to the crowd and said, "I thought that master teachers were all spineless cowards who feared death. What a surprise!"

Seeing that Zhang Yinqiu's soul was tightly grasped in the Skyleaf King's hands, Vice Principal Tan Qing clenched his jaws and said, "Let go of our principal! As the leader of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings, a Leaving Aperture realm expert, don't you think that it's beneath you to deal with a powerless soul?"

"Beneath me? Hah! If it wasn't for that, do you think that this fellow would have been able to live to this day?" the Skyleaf King replied with ferocity.

Trapped within the statue, Zhang Yinqiu was unable to leave the rooftop of the Saint Ascension Hall at all.

There were various intervals in which the Saint Ascension Platform did not emanated sacred light, and the Skyleaf King could have easily made use of such intervals to kill Zhang Yinqiu. The reason he had not done so was out of consideration of his standing, and just as Vice Principal Ji Yan and the others had guessed, it would also be harder for him to find a way to escape if all of the master teachers were killed.

Furthermore, Zhang Yinqiu posed no threat at all, and in his current form, living would only be more painful than death.

"What do we have to do for you to release the old principal?" Zhang Xuan asked with a deep frown.

Judging from how the Skyleaf King had yet to make a move after all this while, it was apparent that he was intending to use Zhang Yinqiu as leverage to negotiate with them.

"Simple! Hand over that fellow who beat me up along with the map, and I'll let him go. Otherwise, you will have to watch helplessly as his soul dissipates into nothing!" As the Skyleaf King spoke about the person who had beaten him up, his voice grew visibly colder and angrier.

This was the first time that someone had successfully managed to pull off an assault against him since becoming the number one expert of the Qingtian Ten Great Kings. To make matters worse, his head was utterly crushed, thus rendering his physical

body completely useless. Just the thought of it left him so furious that he could explode on the spot.

"The fellow who beat you up?" Zhang Xuan blinked his eyes blankly.

He had thought that the Skyleaf King would use Zhang Yinqiu as a leverage to claim his life, but who could have known that his hatred for his clone far exceeded his...

But thinking about it, that was to be expected. After all, his clone had destroyed the other party's body in a single hit, so it was only natural that the other party was filled with antagonism for his clone.

"Indeed. Hand that fellow over with the map, and I will release Zhang Yinqiu!" the Skyleaf King nodded.

"Very well. We can hand them over to you, but you must swear to the Spirit God that not only will you not kill the old principal, you are also not to lay your hands on us in the next twenty-four hours!" Zhang Xuan said. "Otherwise, if you go after us right after we save the old principal, that would render the exchange completely meaningless!"

Considering that Zhang Xuan had the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence in his hands, it would not take long for him to achieve a breakthrough on the Saint Ascension Platform. As long as he could prevent the Skyleaf King from attacking them for the time being, he would be able to successfully become a Celestial Saint and slay the latter.

The Skyleaf King was taken aback. "You know of our Spirit God?"

Swearing to the Spirit God was an extremely sacred and solemn ritual of their Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. A vow that was sworn to the Spirit God could not be broken, or else the Spirit God would claim one's soul as forfeit.

"Why? You dare not agree to our request? That's fine as well, but you need not dream about obtaining the map either; let's all die here together. We're all trapped here anyway, so it's only a matter of time before you join us in the underworld!" Noting the Skyleaf King's hesitation, Zhang Xuan immediately pushed his case on to topple the scales in his favor.

The Skyleaf King contemplated for a long while before he eventually nodded. "Alright then, I will make a vow to the Spirit God!"

"Let's begin then." Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out an altar of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. It was the one that he had obtained from the hands of the Jadeleaf King.

Seeing how thorough Zhang Xuan was, the Skyleaf King realized that it would be impossible for him to dupe the other party, and he sneered coldly, "You sure are well-prepared, aren't you? Fine, I shall make a vow to the Spirit God here!"

Hong long!

Innumerable treasures appeared on top of the altar, and as the Skyleaf King began speaking in a foreign tongue, the items began burning up.

Geji! Geji!

All of a sudden, the sky suddenly turned pitch-black, and a massive door materialized right above him.

Everyone's body stiffened in the presence of the door.

There was an inconceivably powerful aura that was being emanated from within the door. Before such massive power, it felt as if even cultivators of their strength could be torn into shreds with just a mere thought.

Standing before such power, Zhang Xuan's heart also skipped a beat.

Back then, the Jadeleaf King had only utilized the altar to verify Feng Xun's identity as a Celestial Master Teacher, so the door had not appeared. He had not thought that the Skyleaf King's vow would call upon such a fearsome existence.

Hu!

The door slowly opened, and a silhouette came into view.

It was a mere silhouette, but its very presence left the crowd feeling as if their souls would burst at any moment. If the existence were to really descend upon this land, would the Master Teacher Continent be destroyed?

Inside the door was completely dark, making the silhouette extremely vague. However, through his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan was still able to catch a decent

glimpse within the door, and a deep frown emerged on his forehead.

That silhouette... Where have I seen it before?

However, before he could give the matter much thought, the Skyleaf King suddenly began making his vow, dragging Zhang Xuan's attention away from the silhouette.

"I, the Skyleaf King, vow in the name of the Spirit God that as long as I am given the map and the offender who destroyed my body, I will immediately release Zhang Yinqiu and not harm him and his comrades within the next twenty-four hours. If I ever break this vow, may the Spirit God claim my life and soul as forfeit."

Huala!

Right after those words were spoken, a brilliant ray of light burst forth from within the door and fell right on his head, entering his mind.

It seemed to be confirmation that the Spirit God had accepted the vow.

Hu!

After that was done, the door slowly dissipated from existence. With a slightly pale look on his face, the Skyleaf King turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "How is it? I have already made my vow, so can you believe me now?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. He was just about to take out his clone and map when Wu shi's voice suddenly sounded in his ear via zhenqi telepathy.

"Something is not right; everything seems to be proceeding too smoothly. Don't you think that the Skyleaf King has accepted our request too quickly? He even willingly made a vow to the Spirit God at our request. Could there be a trap somewhere?"

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement. "There's definitely a trap somewhere..."

Given the Skyleaf King's superior cultivation, he was in an advantageous situation compared to them. Yet, he still chose to accept to their terms without much hesitation or bargaining. It was truly hard to believe that the other party was not up to something given this bizarre situation.

"Then..." Wu shi frowned.

"The old principal is currently in his hands, so we have no other choice but to go along with it. Besides, he might have his trap, but we have our own trump card as well. As long as we can stall for some time, I will be able to successfully become a Celestial Saint and slay him, thus resolving any the situation once and for all," Zhang Xuan replied telepathically.

Considering that they were in a disadvantageous situation, it was already a huge blessing that the Skyleaf King was willing to accept their terms. Even if there was trap hidden somewhere, they had no choice but to leap right into it.

"This..." Knowing that the Skyleaf King was definitely up to something, Wu shi felt a little reluctant to go ahead with the plan. However, he also understood that there was no other path they could take at the moment.

If the Skyleaf King really made a move against them, they would not be able to stop him.

"Hurry up, don't test my patience. Where is that fellow and my map?" the Skyleaf King said impatiently.

"They are over here..." Without much hesitation, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and his clone appeared beside him.

Since his clone was the one who had landed them in the current predicament, it was only natural that he should take responsibility for the matter as well.

In any case, his clone was forged out of the Nine Hearts Lotus, so even if he were to be pummeled into a flat pancake, even with the incredible strength the Skyleaf King wielded, Zhang Xuan did not think that the other party was capable of killing his clone.

At this moment, his clone had already recovered from his flattened face. In order not to shock the others too much, Zhang Xuan had his clone alter his appearance to that of Sun Qiang's in the Anthive Nest before coming out.

"He's the fellow who laid his hands on me earlier?" Seeing a fatty whom he did not recognize appearing before him, the Skyleaf King frowned doubtfully.

"Indeed. He's capable of disguising himself. He was the one who disguised himself as the Scarletleaf King earlier, too," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Very well..."

With hatred and wrath in his eyes, the Skyleaf King raised his hand, and an immense might immediately wrapped itself around Zhang Xuan's clone. With a powerful tug, the Skyleaf King pulled the clone over to his side, holding the latter hostage.

After grabbing hold of his clone, the Skyleaf King did not rush to exact vengeance on him. Instead, he turned to Zhang Xuan once more and asked, "What about the map?"

"It's over here!" Zhang Xuan stretched out his hand, and an ancient goatskin sheet materialized above his palm. Floating calmly, it emanated an historic air around it.

Honestly speaking, the map was not much use at all. So far, all it had done was form a rainbow bridge that allowed the expedition team to bypass the celestial palace and enter the Qiu Wu Palace. If the Skyleaf King really wanted it, there was no harm in handing it over to him.

"Give it to me..." A look of fiery desire swiftly flickered across the Skyleaf King's eyes as he anxiously stretched his hand forward.

"Alright." With a flick of his finger, Zhang Xuan passed the map over to the Skyleaf King.

"Wu! Wuwuwu! Wuwuwuwu..." Seeing that the map was about to fall into the Skyleaf King's grasp, the silenced Zhang Yinqiu panicked. He tried to say something, but the binding that the Skyleaf King had cast over him prevented him from speaking a word.

"Good! Alright, I'll return this one to you then!" With a light push, the Skyleaf King tossed Zhang Yinqiu's soul toward Zhang Xuan and the others.

Zhang Xuan and the others hurriedly rushed forward to catch Zhang Yinqiu's soul, and Wu Shi quickly relieved Zhang Yinqiu of his bindings.

As soon as the binding was released, Zhang Yinqiu immediately said anxiously, "The map concerns the possession of the ancient domain; we cannot let him gain possession of it!"

"Hahaha, it's too late!"

Standing in midair with the map in his grasp, the Skyleaf King's excited voice boomed in the area, and the Saint Ascension Hall abruptly began shaking intensely.

Chapter 1082

You Are Blocking Me from Watching

Zhang Xuan Pose

Boom!

With a smooth motion, the map in the Skyleaf King's grasp opened up, and the Saint Ascension Hall suddenly began shaking intensely. In fact, the shaking seemed to extend to the Qiu Wu Palace and even beyond.

An enormous power seemed to be gushing from the depths of the ground, and it felt as if something frightening was about to surface.

Feeling the powerful aura, everyone's face warped in horror.

The aura was simply too powerful. The Skyleaf King was already an opponent that was nigh impossible for them to deal with previously, but before this aura, they felt that they did not even stand a sliver of chance.

Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed. "This is... the aura of the Subterranean Gallery's seal?"

He had felt such a sensation from the seal in the Subterranean Gallery before. Vast and powerful, it felt like something no being could ever hope to stand against.

Geji! Geji!

The aura grew more and more powerful, and eventually, at the summons of the map, a massive sphere slowly burrowed out of the ground.

Similar to a crystal ball, the sphere was transparent. Zhang Xuan could not tell what it was made of, but the sheer power harnessed within it could easily crush all of them.

Seeing the abrupt twist in circumstances, Wu shi hurriedly asked, "Zhang Yinqiu, what is going on?"

"It's the map!" With a pale face, Zhang Yinqiu spoke with despair in his eyes.

"Map? Doesn't the map only serve to point out a safe path through the ancient domain?" Wu shi asked with a frown.

They had seen the map when Zhang Xuan had it, and all it had done for them so far was create a bridge that led them into the true Qiu Wu Palace. Other than it, it seemed to serve no practical purpose at all.

"Point out a safe path?" Zhang Yinqiu shook his head. "It's far more important than that. That map is actually the key to Qiu Wu Palace! Inscribed on it are the words of the ancient gods and a unique Spatial Formation. Once it fuses with the sphere, the map will be able to store the entire Qiu Wu Palace within it!"

"Store the entire Qiu Wu Palace within it?" The crowd was startled.

"On your way here, you must have realized that Qiu Wu Palace is actually a folded space. The sphere over there is the core of Qiu Wu Palace, it serves to regulate the energy within it and stabilize the space.

"The map serves as the key to controlling the sphere. Once the sphere fuses together with the map, the entire Qiu Wu palace will become a painting, similar to the celestial palace outside. If that happens, not only will the Skyleaf King gain possession over all of the treasures that Ancient Sage Qiu Wu and Kong shi have left behind, we will also be trapped within the painting, and the Skyleaf King would be able to deal with us as he please!" Zhang Yinqiu said anxiously.

"This..." Everyone's body jolted in shock.

The reason they were so helpless before the Scarletleaf King back when they were within the celestial palace was because they were 'trapped within the painting' whereas the Scarletleaf King was 'outside the painting'.

The old principal was right. Once the Skyleaf King successfully fused the sphere together with the map, the entire ancient domain would be his to control. If that truly happened, they would be in deep trouble.

"Back then, on top of leaving behind his heritage for master teachers, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu has also created the map and entrusted it into trustworthy hands so that those who require its strength would be able to use it in times of crisis. Those who possess

the map can fuse it together with the sphere, and that would grant them complete control over Qiu Wu Palace.

"If the Skyleaf King truly gains possession of Qiu Wu Palace, even without the heritage, he would still be able to analyze and reverse engineer the structure of the seal. Once he succeeds, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe will be able to send their armies into the Master Teacher Continent, and mankind will be in for a tough fight. It is also for this reason that I rushed over as fast as I could to stop him, having thought that the Skyleaf King had already obtained the map."

Upon hearing those words, everyone came to a realization.

Previously, Zhang Xuan had been thinking that since it was impossible for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to obtain Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's heritage, why did the old principal and the others still charge into the ancient domain to stop them despite knowing the huge risks it posed?

At this moment, everything was finally clear to him.

"What do we do now?" Wu shi asked worriedly.

They were currently in a race against time. If the Skyleaf King succeeded in fusing the sphere with the map, mankind could very well be facing a calamity on an unprecedented scale.

"There's only one thing we can do now—stop the map and the sphere from fusing together!" Zhang Yinqiu said grimly.

"Alright!" everyone replied grimly.

"Principal Zhang, you should go and attempt for a breakthrough first. Leave the Skyleaf King to us!" Wu shi said.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded.

He knew that given his current strength, he would not be of any help for the others in their fight against the Skyleaf King. Since that was the case, it was better for him to focus on achieving a breakthrough. Once he succeeded, the current adversity they were in could be resolved easily.

Not expecting the Nascent Saint cultivator to be thinking about breaking through at such a crucial moment, Zhang Yinqiu could not help but frown. "Breakthrough? Even if a Nascent Saint achieves a breakthrough to Saint realm, it still won't make a difference to the current plight we are in."

"Don't worry, Principal Zhang Yinqiu. It's not any ordinary breakthrough that he's going for," Wu shi replied with a soft chuckle. After which, he took in a deep breath, and his eyes suddenly grew solemn. With an abrupt leap, he charged swiftly toward the Skyleaf King as if a streak of lightning.

Tzzzla!

Knowing that his opponent wielded strength far beyond him, Wu shi used a secret art right from the get-go, forcing his body to exert a might far beyond his current limits.

"Wait for me!"

Guild Leader Han also swiftly leaped up to support Wu shi.

In an instant, the two Saint 4-dan experts immediately began clashing with the Skyleaf King.

Had it been any other occasion, the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit would be more than able to subdue the both of them with a single palm strike. However, at that moment, he had to devote a portion of his strength and focus to facilitating the fusion of the map and the sphere, so his strength had been reduced significantly. As a result, a stalemate had actually arisen from their clash.

"Not any ordinary breakthrough that he's going for?" On the other hand, Zhang Yinqiu knew that he would not stand a chance against the Skyleaf King in his current form, so he turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan doubtfully instead.

Just what kind of breakthrough was the latter going to achieve for Wu shi to say such words?

However, this doubt did not last for too long in his mind, as he soon saw Zhang Xuan walking toward the Saint Ascension Platform.

The Saint Ascension Platform was protected by an extremely powerful seal, making it nigh impossible for anyone else to approach it. Yet, for some reason, the seal displayed

an exceptional intimacy toward Zhang Xuan, opening up a path for him to pass through without any hesitation.

A thought surfaced in Zhang Yinqiu's mind, and his eyes widened in shock. The seal opened up for him? Could it be... Could it be... Celestial Master Teacher?

In terms of their understanding of Qiu Wu Palace, there was no one there who could rival Zhang Yinqiu.

There was only one possibility for the seal to open up a path voluntarily for one to pass through—the person had met the requirements to become a Celestial Saint. In other words, the young man before him was actually a Celestial Master Teacher!

Hong long!

Before his shocked gaze, the young man before him took a seat on top of the Saint Ascension Platform. With a flick of his wrist, a seven-colored fluid materialized before the young man.

"That is... the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence!" Zhang Yinqiu exclaimed.

As rare as the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence was, it had a rather distinctive and unique appearance. Those who had heard of it before could easily recognize it.

On the Saint Ascension Platform, Zhang Xuan held the Seven-colored Earth Jade Essence in one hand while tapping on it lightly with the forefinger of his other hand. In the next instant, the seven-colored energy harnessed within the fluid swiftly seeped into the many acupoints throughout his body.

Geji! Geji!

A resounding echo sounded, and Zhang Xuan's aura began surging swiftly. In the blink of an eye, he had already overcome the limitations of Nascent Saint pinnacle, heading toward a far greater level.

Such incredible power... Is he really just attempting a breakthrough to Saint realm?

Zhang Yinqiu gulped subconsciously as he stared at the sight before him fixedly.

Even though the young man before him was only attempting a breakthrough from

Nascent Saint to Saint realm 1-dan, the aura that he was emanating felt profound and unfathomable, as if one was staring into the deep abyss. Zhang Yinqiu had once witnessed a Saint 2-dan achieving a breakthrough to Saint 3-dan, but it paled greatly in comparison to what was happening before him.

If anything, they were not even on the same level!

Zhang Yinqiu could hardly believe his eyes. Is he really trying to become a Celestial Saint?

The fact that Kong shi had made such preparations within the Qiu Wu Palace showed that he had no doubt that there would surely come another Celestial Saint after him, but even so, Zhang Yinqiu still found it hard to believe that anyone could succeed in accomplishing that seemingly impossible feat.

After all, there was only one Kong shi in the world. None could replace him; none could match up to him.

Had the world not had Kong shi, the ancient times would have been bleak like the onset of a long night!

"He's definitely going to. After all, that fellow knows of nothing but showing off."

While Zhang Yinqiu was still caught in his state of disbelief, a slightly sour voice sounded beside him. Turning around, he saw that the fatty who had been exchanged for him had, at some point in time, taken a position beside him, his eyes fixated on the young man on the Saint Ascension Platform as well. There was a deeply displeased look on his face, seemingly angered by the fact that the limelight had been stolen by the other party.

"You... You are bleeding from your seven apertures 1..."

Upon seeing the state that the fatty was in, Zhang Yinqiu's lips began twitching uncontrollably.

If anyone were to bleed from their seven apertures as profusely as the fatty was at the moment, they would surely have died near instantly. Yet, the fatty seemed to be completely unfazed by it. He continued looking at the young man on the Saint Ascension Platform with his teeth gritted in envy.

"Oh, it's actually nothing much once you get used to it," the fatty replied nonchalantly.

"You can actually get used to bleeding from your seven apertures?" Zhang Yinqiu nearly fainted on the spot.

Just where in this world did this monster come from?

While others were dying due to bleeding from their seven apertures, this fatty was saying that it was fine once one had gotten used to it.

"No, it's not just that..." With twitching lips, Zhang Yinqiu continued speaking. "There's a sword stabbed into your back... I think it has pierced through your heart..."

If the fatty was only bleeding from his seven apertures, he would not have been so surprised. However, there was a sword plunged into his back, and judging from the angle, it had pierced right through the fatty's heart. Was he really still fine despite being in such a state?

"Pierced through my heart?" Perplexed, the fatty glanced downward and saw the tip of a sword protruding from the front of his chest. His eyebrows shot up before replying nonchalantly, "Oh? I wouldn't have noticed it if you hadn't said so. However, that's not really an issue to be concerned over. It'll be fine once I pluck it out!"

After saying those words, the fatty bent his hand in an inconceivable angle to grab the sword behind his back and extract it. Tossing the extracted sword nonchalantly on the ground, he said, "There, it's done!"

"I..." Zhang Yinqiu was completely frenzied. The insanity that he had just witnessed made him feel as if the world had gone mad.

Just what in the heck was the monster before him made of? How could he still be living despite being in such a state?

"Curses! You sure are resilient, aren't you? Let's see if this can kill you!"

While Zhang Yinqiu was still overwhelmed by his shock, a wrathful bellow sounded from the sky. The next moment, the Skyleaf King threw a powerful palm down toward the fatty.

Kacha!

In the blink of an eye, the fatty was reduced to a flat lump of meat, glued to the ground.

"Ahh!" Horrified, Zhang Yinqiu subconsciously took numerous steps back with a pale face.

It was just a moment ago that he was still speaking to the fatty, but the latter was suddenly reduced to a lump of meat the next moment. The striking visual was something that was hard for him to accept in a moment.

"This young brother over here, rest assured. Even at the cost of my life, I will exact vengeance for you..." Zhang Yinqiu said solemnly before turning his gaze toward the Skyleaf King with eyes reddened in killing intent.

However, before he could even finish his vow, an impatient voice sounded from the ground.

"What the heck are you mumbling there? Hurry up and step away, you are blocking me from watching Zhang Xuan pose."

Alarmed, Zhang Yinqiu lowered his head, only to see that two eyes were staring at him impatiently from the lump of meat on the ground.

Chapter 1083

Celestial Saint Ordeal

"Ah..." Leaping up, Zhang Yinqiu nearly fainted from shock.

If the other party was still living despite bleeding from the seven apertures and taking a sword to the heart, he could at least still reason it as the other party possessing a secret art of some sort which allowed him to shift his heart away from its original position... But how could a person who was smacked into a lump of meat possibly still be living?!

More importantly, you said that I was blocking your path?

Just how concerned are you with Zhang Shi's posing, no, attempting a breakthrough that you are still so fixated on watching it despite being in such a state?

Just as Zhang Yinqiu was rendered at a complete loss of words, another surge of sword qi flashed across the air.

The Skyleaf King seemed to have noticed that the fellow was still alive and launched another wave of attack over out of fury.

Kacha!

Under the immense might of the Skyleaf King, the lump of meat was immediately split into two lumps as it wriggled relentlessly on the ground.

"Y-you... You should be dead this time around, right?" With quivering lips, Zhang Yinqiu couldn't help but ask.

"You're the one who is dead, your entire family is dead!" the two lumps of meat refuted furiously. After which, the two eyeballs on them turned towards the Skyleaf King and spat, "It's only out of consideration for your dignity that I chose to feign death here, and yet, you just have to persistently come for me time after time again... You are just asking to die, aren't you?"

Hong long!

The two lumps on the ground merged back with one another, and in just a few moments, he had already reverted back to his original appearance as a fatty, as if he hadn't been injured in the first place. With a furious roar, he charged towards the Skyleaf King in the sky.

Just like that, Zhang Xuan's clone joined the fray as well.

However, it was apparent that the strength of Zhang Xuan's clone was far from matching up to the Skyleaf King. Shortly after leaping up, he was knocked back down into the ground with a single slap, reduced to a lump of meat once more.

This time, before Zhang Yinqiu could even express his grief, the lump of meat gathered again once more and continued clashing with the Skyleaf King.

"This..." Not only was Zhang Yinqiu dazed, even Wu shi and Guild Leader Han were stupefied as well.

Wasn't Principal Zhang's friend a little too absurdly resilient? It was as if his body was made of rubber, and nothing could faze him at all... How in the world did he manage to cultivate a body like that?

A moment later, Wu shi recovered from his shock and bellowed, "Let's go all out. We just have to keep him stall him for a while..."

There wasn't any time for them to be surprised at the moment. No matter the cost, they had to prevent the Skyleaf King from successfully fusing the map and the sphere together. If the Skyleaf King were to succeed, they would all lose their lives here.

The collaborative offense carried out by the numerous Saint 4-dan experts brought forth a furious barrage of sword qi and zhenqi. Devastating shockwaves rippled into the surroundings, inflicting havoc upon everything that stood in its path.

With an indestructible monster joining the battle, Wu shi and the others were able to remain unharmed under the Skyleaf King's attacks for the time being. Seeing that the situation over there was stable for the time being, Zhang Yinqiu turned his sight back to the young man on the Saint Ascension Platform and saw that the energy within his body was still increasing ceaselessly, as if the power he harnessed within his body was boundless.

"Just how much energy does he have in his body..." Zhang Yinqiu couldn't help but be astonished.

Any Nascent Saint cultivators in his place would have already expended their zhenqi by now and withered into dried jerky. Yet, the young man seemed to be completely unfazed by the massive energy consumption he was making!

Just in terms of zhenqi reserve in itself, even ten of him in his peak state couldn't compare to the young man.

After watching the situation for a while, Zhang Yinqiu determined that they were still doing fine for the time being, and he heaved a sigh of relief. He was just about to turn his gaze back to the battle in the sky when he caught sight of a beautiful silhouette not too far away, and he frowned, "Luo shi, why aren't you participating in the battle too?"

The beautiful master teacher who had come along with Wu shi's expedition team, Luo shi, was currently standing nonchalantly on the spot, as if the battle that was going on in the sky had nothing to do with her.

"I need to protect Zhang Xuan." Luo shi replied calmly.

"He's just attempting a breakthrough. With the protection of the Saint Ascension Platform, he can't possibly be in any danger..." Zhang Yinqiu frowned.

Even if your cultivation might be beneath the others, given that everyone else was putting their life on the line, shouldn't you at least be doing something? To say that you are protecting Zhang shi... Zhang shi is just attempting a breakthrough on the Saint Ascension Platform, what could possibly happen to him?

Hong long!

Before Zhang Yinqiu could finish his words, the deafening rumbling of thunder abruptly sounded in the sky above. All of a sudden, pitch-black clouds appeared in the sky right above the Saint Ascension Platform, and the destructive lightning energy harnessed within them threatened to lay waste to everything beneath it.

"That is... the Leaving Aperture Ordeal? How can it possibly appear here?" Zhang Yinqiu widened his eyes in shock, and he nearly keeled over.

It was said in the legends that when a Primordial Spirit realm cultivator attempted a

breakthrough to Leaving Aperture realm, he would have to undergo a lightning ordeal. The trial would temper one's Primordial Spirit, making it more resilient. It was a necessary requirement for the Primordial Spirit to be able to exist independently of the body without dissipating... In a sense, it could be considered as a life-and-death trial in order to ascend to higher ranks.

It was for this reason that even though there was only a small gap between Primordial Spirit realm and Leaving Aperture realm, there was a world of a difference in both of their fighting prowess. Only upon reaching Leaving Aperture realm could one be considered to have reached the upper echelons of the Master Teacher Continent.

However, clearing the Leaving Aperture Ordeal was no easy feat. There were many Primordial Spirit realm experts who would suppress their cultivation for several centuries for fear that their Primordial Spirit would dissipate under the devastating might of the lightning. This resulted in a disproportionately low number of Leaving Aperture realm cultivators as compared to Primordial Spirit realm cultivators.

Considering that Zhang shi was a Nascent Saint cultivator attempting a breakthrough to Saint realm, why would he be put through such a fearsome heavenly ordeal?

"Everyone wishes to become a Celestial Saint, but without sufficient strength, how could one obtain the acknowledgement of the heavens?" Luo shi remarked nonchalantly before taking a step forward. She glanced at the ominous clouds that shrouded the sky as she clenched her fists tightly together.

"A requirement to becoming a Celestial Saint... is to prematurely undergo the Leaving Aperture Ordeal?" Upon hearing those words, Zhang Yinqiu gulped.

He was incapable of sweating as a mere soul, but at this moment, he felt as if his back was drenched with cold sweat.

Leaving Aperture Ordeal—this was a trial which innumerable Half-Leaving Aperture realm in history had lost their life to. Given that Zhang shi was only a Nascent Saint cultivator, how could he be able to endure it?

Putting everything aside, Zhang Yinqiu could tell that even in his peak state, his body and soul would still dissipate at first encounter with the overwhelming lightning energy gathered in the sky above.

"This is not the Leaving Aperture Ordeal but Saint Ascension Ordeal! Those who wish

to ascend to a Celestial Saint has to first undergo a trial to prove that they are worthy of becoming one..." Luo Ruoxin's voice was impassive, but she was unable to conceal the deep worry in her eyes. "He must overcome the heavenly ordeal with his own strength. We can only pray the best for him..."

"Saint Ascension Ordeal?"

While the others were shocked by the sudden arrival of the lightning clouds, on the Saint Ascension Platform, Zhang Xuan also came to realize what was going on, and a frown appeared on his face.

It was no wonder why no one had succeeded in becoming a Celestial Saint in the past several dozen millenniums! There were bound to be a handful of astounding geniuses who were able to comprehend the secrets behind Kong shi's cultivation technique as well, but one who wished to don the crown had to bear the weight of it. Those who wished to become a Celestial Saint had to undergo the Saint Ascension Ordeal to prove their worth!

There was no way he would be able to overcome the lightning ordeal easily.

"Come!"

Zhang Xuan knew that it was impossible for him to avoid the lightning ordeal, and the only way he could succeed was to face it straight on. Thus, gritting his teeth tightly together, he opened up his pores, and spiritual energy in the surroundings began rushing into him like a whirlpool. At the same time, he lifted his gaze and stared right into the dark clouds above.

Hong long!

Seemingly sensing Zhang Xuan's battle will, the lightning clouds in the sky couldn't hold themselves back any longer. A thick streak of lightning burst from the sky, headed towards the young man seated in the middle of the Saint Ascension Platform.

If one had to make a comparison between the field of lightning from before to the thick streak of lightning headed towards Zhang Xuan at this instant, it would be reminiscent of a young sprout standing before a towering, ancient tree. The both of them weren't even close to being at the same level at all!

Before the lightning could even reach him, Zhang Xuan could already feel an incredible

force threatening to eradicate his body and dissipate his soul. He felt that if his cultivation had been any lower, he wouldn't stand a chance against the streak of lightning at all.

"The Saint Ascension Ordeal is divided into the Soul Ordeal, Body Ordeal, and Heart Ordeal, and each of them is more difficult than the previous..." Luo Ruoxin said with a slightly anxious edge to her tone.

It was impossible for others to intervene in this kind of ordeal. Not only would it not do any good, it might even trigger the wrath of the heavens, inducing the heavens to bring forth greater destruction to the world.

"Soul Ordeal?" Hearing Luo Ruoxin's words, Zhang Yinqiu frowned.

He had learned a little about the process of becoming a Celestial Saint through the writings left by Kong Shi around the Saint Ascension Hall. He thought that he had already grasped a thorough understanding of the matter, but at this moment, he realized that what he knew paled far in comparison to the young lady before him.

"The Soul Ordeal is the very first trial of the Saint Ascension Ordeal, and it places the cultivator's soul through the tempering and cleansing of lightning. The slightest lapse in concentration in this phase can easily lead to one's soul dissipating entirely." Luo Ruoxin explained.

"The soul has to undergo the cleansing of lightning?" Zhang Yinqiu shuddered in fear.

As he was currently in soul form, he could vividly understand how much souls feared lightning. Lightning was the natural nemesis of all souls. Putting aside a lightning streak as thick as the one in the sky, even just the slightest electricity was unbearable to a soul.

"Zhang Shi... I can only pray the best for you now..." Zhang Yinqiu said as he looked at Zhang Xuan intently.

Huala!

As soon as the lightning seeped into Zhang Xuan's body, he immediately felt a burning sensation in his soul, as if someone had lit an inferno within it. His condensed soul immediately began flickering unstably, and it seemed as if it might dissipate at any moment.

"Pain..." Zhang Xuan's face paled.

The burning sensation came from the very depths of his soul, and it was so excruciating that he felt as if he could lose his mind at any moment.

It was fortunate that he had tempered his soul through the lava and field of lightning while he was making his way through the ancient domain, or else his soul might have already dissipated by now.

"It seems like the various trials outside aren't chosen by random. Kong shi has intentionally designed it to temper the later generations so as to prepare them for a breakthrough to Celestial Saint..." While enduring the excruciating pain of the lightning, an epiphany suddenly came to Zhang Xuan.

Throughout the journey, he had been wondering what the purpose of setting up the lava and the field of lightning was. If it was to fend off the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, it didn't make sense why masters teachers were impeded by them as well. Looking back, it seemed like everything was for the purpose of tempering the soul so as to make it sufficiently resilient to overcome the Soul Ordeal.

Tzzzzz!

As the lightning energy raged within Zhang Xuan's body, his soul shattered into fragments before reforming once more.

It was fortunate that the process was occurring within his body, or else his fragmented soul would have long dissipated in the world.

Under the intense pain from the rampage of the lightning energy, Zhang Xuan felt his consciousness slowly growing hazy.

He hadn't expected becoming a Celestial Saint to be easy, but he didn't think that it would be so frightening either.

That kind of intense pain left him feeling as if every inch of his soul was being slowly cut apart before being sewed back together.

"Endure! I must endure it... Since Kong shi was able to do it, why can't I?" Zhang Xuan thought as he clenched his jaws tightly in determination.

Kong shi was mortal just like any of them. If Kong shi could clear the trial, why couldn't he?

After all the effort he had put into cultivating the Saint Ascension Decipher, he would be letting himself down if he couldn't even endure this much pain!

Geji! Geji!

With the further reaffirmation of his resolution, even though the lightning energy coursing through his body was still as painful as ever, it didn't seem as insurmountable and fearsome as before anymore.

"It looks like he has cleared the Soul Ordeal..." Upon seeing this sight, Luo Ruoxin heaved a sigh of relief. In the next moment, however, she frowned worriedly once more and said, "The Body Ordeal is a trial which assesses not only one's physical body but one's grasp over zhenqi and cultivation as well. Hopefully, nothing goes wrong there..."

As the Body Ordeal consisted of more aspects, it would be more difficult to overcome it than the previous Soul Ordeal, and the cultivator would be put through a greater deal of suffering as well.

The lightning streak in the Soul Ordeal was fearsome, but as long as the cultivator's soul remained within his body, he wouldn't be in too much danger as long as he didn't succumb to the pain. However, the same couldn't be said about the Body Ordeal. If the cultivator's body were to be lacking in the slightest, he could very well be reduced to ashes on the spot.

Kacha!

After a long moment of gathering energy, the second streak of lightning finally burst forth.

It was much thicker than the first streak of lightning, roughly the size of the trunk of an ancient tree. It descended to the ground with a force which seemed as if it could tear even the Saint Ascension Platform into shreds as well.

"You might be able to call forth the lightning ordeal, but do you think that I will allow you to become a Celestial Saint that easily?"

At this moment, the Skyleaf King had finally shaken free from Wu shi and the others' encirclement. Upon seeing that Zhang Xuan had successfully overcome the Soul Ordeal, his face turned livid.

Raising his palm, he sent a powerful strike right towards Zhang Xuan!

Chapter 1084

I Am a Really Good Teacher!

Huala!

The spiritual energy from the surroundings converged together to form a massive palm print, which was then blasted toward Zhang Xuan with astounding force.

If he were struck by the palm strike, there was no doubt that he would die there and then.

"Skyleaf King, your opponent is me!"

Alarmed, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han hurriedly rushed forward to defend Zhang Xuan from the palm strike.

Not expecting there to be such an abrupt twist in events, Luo Ruoxin's face darkened as she shouted hurriedly, "Don't rush over!"

However, it was already too late. Wu shi and Guild Leader Han had already stepped into the perimeter of the lightning ordeal. Pumping their zhenqi furiously, they were able to barely deflect the powerful palm strike that the Skyleaf King had sent over. However, in the next moment, a deep rumbling sounded from above, and the dark clouds abruptly expended more than twofold.

An even more astonishing amount of lightning energy was gathering within the dark clouds, preparing to launch a lethal strike upon its target.

Upon seeing that sight, Zhang Yinqiu's face paled. "What happened?"

Why would there suddenly be a rise in the difficulty of the lightning ordeal? The previous streak of lightning was already something that even Zhang Xuan could hardly withstand, so if it were to grow stronger...

"The Saint Ascension Ordeal alters its difficulty according to the strength of the cultivator. As Wu shi and Guild Leader Han stepped into the vicinity of the lightning

ordeal, the lightning ordeal mistakenly thought that Zhang shi has achieved a breakthrough, so it's sending down an even stronger streak of lightning for him to deal with," Luo Ruoxin explained with a pale face.

"What should we do then?" Zhang Yinqiu's body shook in shock.

"There's nothing we can do; we can't interfere in the matter." Luo Ruoxin gritted her teeth. "The more we try to help, the more formidable the lightning ordeal that Zhang shi will be put through..."

Kacha!

Before she could finish her words, the black clouds finally finished charging up, and the lightning grew two times larger in the blink of an eye.

Hong long!

From the first streak of lightning, Zhang Xuan's entire body was already charred black. With the descend of the second streak of lightning, he felt as if a force was tearing his entire body apart.

Pu!

Fresh blood burst forth from his mouth as his veins ruptured from the lightning energy rampaging through his body. In the blink of an eye, his entire body was dyed crimson.

"Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body!" Muttering softly, the insides of Zhang Xuan's body began glowing brilliantly as he drove the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body to its very limits.

The second streak of lightning was the Body Ordeal, so he only had his strongest physical body cultivation technique to rely on to fend off the lightning.

Kacha! Kacha! Kacha!

Under the relentless assault of the lightning from above, layer after layer of radiance shimmering around him broke one after another. As if his body was made of ceramic, cracks began appearing on his skin, and blood flowed profusely out of those cracks.

How could the lightning be so powerful? Zhang Xuan exclaimed within his heart.

Even though the previous Soul Ordeal was unbearable, it had not been beyond his limits. On the other hand, the Body Ordeal he was going through was simply too powerful. Despite having cultivated his Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body to its pinnacle, facing the lightning, he felt like an egg being smashed by a hammer. There was no way he could win at this rate.

Geji!

The cracks on his body grew larger and more numerous, and the lightning energy engulfed his entirety. In that moment, Zhang Xuan felt as if his head and four limbs were torn apart by five horses heading in different directions.

It's not just five horses. It's a hundred of them, a thousand, ten thousand...

The lightning energy felt like ten thousand horses tugging every part of his body. It was as if it would not rest until he was reduced to ashes.

I can't hold on any longer.

The zhenqi in his body swiftly flowed to fend off the lightning energy, and it managed to fend off the devastating lightning energy for nine whole breaths. However, on the tenth breath, he finally came to the limit of his strength, and the lightning energy broke through the defenses of his zhenqi.

Even though he cultivated the peerless Heaven's Path Divine Art, the lightning ordeal he was currently going through exceeded his limits. He could not hold on any longer.

This won't do. If this continues, I will surely die.

So what if you are a lightning ordeal? I don't believe that you don't have flaws!

Gritting his teeth, Zhang Xuan turned a cold gaze toward the dark clouds in the sky.

You might be a powerful force of nature, but nothing in this world is perfect. As long as you have flaws, I will be able to exploit them to tide me through this crisis!

With a glance, a book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Zhang Xuan quickly flipped it open.

Hu la!

A series of words appeared in his head.

"The second phase of the Saint Ascension Ordeal, Body Ordeal. Through gathering the Power of Lightning, it devastates the cultivator's physical body and zhenqi through the destructive might harnessed within it. Flaws: No.1, the nature of the lightning makes it highly destructive against material beings, but it inflicts minimal damage on immaterial beings like souls. It is considered a physical attack..."

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. It inflicts minimal damage on souls?

His soul was still weakened from the previous Soul Ordeal. If the lightning within the Body Ordeal was ineffective against his soul, he could very well absorb it with his soul.

"Come out, my soul!"

With a roar, his soul swiftly slipped through his glabella, and opening his mouth wide, he devoured the lightning that was still descending from the heavens.

Due to the overwhelming radiance of the lightning, no one saw his soul. They merely thought that he had used a secret art of some sort.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzz!

As if a potent tonic, the devoured lightning was swiftly processed into soul energy, enlarging his soul once more.

When the lightning coursed through Zhang Xuan's body and exploded, it caused his body to be inflated to its limit, seemingly threatening to burst it apart. However, when it came to his soul, while it had similar effects, all it had done to its soul was only to make it slightly more condensed. That was not much of a threat at all.

Before long, his soul was finally done absorbing the energy harnessed within the second streak of lightning, and his soul reverted back to its initial size of ten meters.

While the quantity of his soul energy had increased, its purity did not take a dip at all. If anything, it seemed to be even more fearsome than before.

This... Does this mean that I have cleared the second phase of the Saint Ascension Ordeal?

Swiftly returning his soul back to his body, Zhang Xuan looked up and saw that the second streak of lightning swiftly weakening before eventually clearing altogether, and he heaved a huge sigh of relief.

It was fortunate that he had swiftly analyzed the flaws of the Body Ordeal's lightning with the Library of Heaven's Path, or else his body might have succumbed to it and turned into meat paste.

Hong long long!

With the conclusion of the second streak of lightning, thunder began rumbling in the dark clouds above once more as the third streak of lightning threatened to fall.

This time, the rumbling was clearly much louder, and the sheer size of the lightning spanned a diameter of a meter. It was as if it was determined to tear Zhang Xuan apart.

Kacha!

It finally descended down into the world.

"Die!"

In that moment, the Skyleaf King flicked his finger toward Zhang Xuan, and a surge of sword qi flew over.

Upon seeing that Zhang Xuan had managed to clear the second phase of the Saint Ascension Ordeal, he felt deeply threatened. Thus, he intended to kill Zhang Xuan once and for all before the final streak of lightning descended.

Otherwise, if the humans were to usher in another Celestial Saint, that could very well become a catastrophe for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

As such, even though it was only a single flick of the finger, that surge of sword qi actually harnessed the full strength of his body.

Luo Ruoxin's eyes narrowed upon seeing that attack. She began to move forward to protect Zhang Xuan, but before she could do so, a figure suddenly appeared right

before her.

Puchi!

That sword qi tore a huge hole through the figure, but it was eventually still stopped before it could reach Zhang Xuan.

Upon seeing that sight, Luo Ruoxin heaved a sigh of relief and stopped.

The figure was none other than Zhang Xuan's clone.

The Skyleaf King had provoked them far too many times that even someone as composed as the clone could not hold himself back anymore.

"How dare you attack my main body? You must be tired of living!" With a furious roar, the aura of Zhang Xuan's clone's body surged furiously, and with a 'hu!', he leaped right up to the Skyleaf King in the air.

"You..." Not expecting the other party to charge right up to him without any fear for his life, the Skyleaf King was stunned for a moment before sending a palm strike downward.

Kacha!

Struck by the palm strike, Zhang Xuan's clone was reduced to a pancake once more. Nevertheless, it did not erode his fighting will in the least. He continued to dash forward furiously despite the unseemly form he was in, determined to bring down the Skyleaf King.

Tzzla tzzla!

The next moment, a ferocious might struck the Skyleaf King, causing his Primordial Spirit to dissipate slightly.

"Damn it!" Not expecting the other party to risk his life to launch such desperate attacks against him, the Skyleaf King's face turned livid with rage.

Honestly speaking, he was getting vexed at dealing with the fellow before him. It was as if the fellow's body was indestructible! No matter what kind of attacks he launched against the fellow, the latter would always be able to morph back into his original

shape a moment later and continue launching frenzied attacks against him. He truly had no idea how he should deal with such an opponent.

No, this won't do. It's pointless for me to engage them in conflict. As long as I can fuse the map and the sphere together, I will be able to gain complete control over the Qiu Wu Palace. By then, even if Zhang Xuan successfully becomes a Celestial Saint, he will still be trapped in my grasp, the Skyleaf King thought as he dodged the clone's attack.

As a Primordial Spirit, he dared not approach Zhang Xuan in close quarters due to the overwhelming lightning energy that had gathered around him, so he had been trying to launch long-range attacks instead. However, it had not been too effective as the others had been trying their best to intercept his attacks. Not to mention, there was even a seemingly indestructible existence among their ranks that was plaguing him. At this point, he had already realized that it was unlikely that his attacks would reach Zhang Xuan.

Thus, the best option he had was to quickly fuse the map and the sphere together. As long as he could gain complete control over the Qiu Wu Palace, he would be able to destroy the group before him easily, even if they did have a Celestial Saint among them!

"Scram!" With a furious roar, the Skyleaf King knocked the clone away before placing one of his palms on the sphere to forcefully push it against the map, hastening the fusion process.

Weng!

A loud buzz sounded as the map and the sphere fused with one another.

"Quick, we have to stop him!" Zhang Yinqiu exclaimed in a panic.

Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, and Vice Principal Ji Yan dashed over, but before they could come close, they were already knocked back by a flick of the Skyleaf King's hand.

As the battle continued, it was apparent that the Skyleaf King held the advantage in terms of stamina. On top of that, the rest of them had sustained considerable injuries over the course of the battle, resulting in a significant decline in their fighting prowess as well. As a result, they found themselves gradually becoming less and less able to stop the Skyleaf King.

"We are doomed." Seeing that the map and the sphere were close to being fully fused

with one another and the shaking of the Qiu Wu Palace had stopped as well, Zhang Yinqiu's face paled in horror.

It seemed like they had come to the end of the route now. There was nothing they could do at this point anymore.

"We can only pray that Zhang shi successfully becomes a Celestial Saint. If he can achieve a breakthrough, we might still stand a chance at reversing the current situation," Zhang Yinqiu muttered as he turned to look at the young man on the Saint Ascension Platform.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan was currently facing the final phase of the Saint Ascension Ordeal, the Heart Ordeal!

This was known to be the hardest trial to overcome, and its dangers far exceeded the previous two.

"It won't be easy to overcome the Heart Ordeal. Inner Demons will sprout within one's mind and assault one's weaknesses. Even the strongest of experts will find it hard to withstand the beguilement of the Inner Demons. Let's hope that he can endure it!" Luo Ruoxin said with a worried frown on her forehead. Zhang Xuan's successful clearance of the first two trials had done little to alleviate her worries.

If Zhang Xuan were to fail this trial, his consciousness could be wiped out, resulting in his complete death.

It was known among cultivators that tempering one's body was easy, but tempering one's mind was difficult.

Countless talented cultivators in history had died not in the midst of battle but against the Inner Demons that had sprouted in their minds during cultivation.

Oblivious to the happenings outside, in that very instant, Zhang Xuan found himself sinking into a unique state of mind.

As thick as the lightning streak for the Heart Ordeal was, it did not inflict the slightest pain on his body. Instead, it brought his consciousness into a land of complete darkness. Alone and lost, he found himself unsure of where he had come from and where he should head to in the future.

Aimlessly, he walked within the seemingly boundless world of darkness. No directions and no goal, he found himself sinking deeper and deeper into confusion.

Where am I? Where do I have to go? Zhang Xuan thought in a daze.

Boom!

In the midst of his confusion, a completely dark existence reminiscent of a devil suddenly materialized before his eyes. With an alluring voice, he said, "The cultivation technique that you have cultivated so far is flawed! If you continue down this path, death is the only thing you will find at the end of the road..."

"Flawed?"

Even in his dazed state, Zhang Xuan was taken aback by those words. Then, his dazed eyes opened wide on reflex as he replied, "For you to say that the cultivation technique I have cultivated is flawed, it seems like you must have a seriously wrong interpretation of cultivation. How about this, why don't you become my student, and I will give you some guidance? Don't worry, I am a very good teacher!"

"..." Inner Demon.

Chapter 1085

Luo Ruoxin's Strength

The Inner Demon was on the verge of tears.

All along, he had been the one to break the mental resilience of others, causing them to doubt themselves so as to create an opening in their state of mind. Using this opening, he would devour the cultivator whole.

Yet, against this fellow, he didn't even have the time to finish his words before the other party suddenly offered to become his teacher. That was not playing by the rules!

I am an Inner Demon, alright? I am here to beguile you, not to be beguiled by you!

Suppressing the exasperated emotions within him, the Inner Demon continued speaking with the same alluring voice as before.

"Cough cough! As I was saying, there is a huge problem in your cultivation at the moment. If that wasn't the case, how could someone as talented as you, the first one to come close to being a Celestial Saint, possibly be put through so much pain? Just put your trust in me, and you will be able to unleash the full extent of your potential."

His voice had a certain quality that drew others into a trance, making him even more fearsome than a demonic tunist.

"I get what you are saying, but you are the one who is severely misunderstanding something here. The fact that your cultivation technique is different from mine is sufficient evidence to say that you have a huge flaw in your cultivation. If you don't believe me, why don't you try executing a battle technique? I will analyze your situation for you." Waving his hand nonchalantly, Zhang Xuan eyes remained perfectly clear, unaffected by the Inner Demon's beguilement.

Had the other party attempted to beguile him using another topic, there was no saying whether he would have fallen for it or not. However, to attempt to make him doubt his cultivation technique... He was a person who could even make Ancient Sage Qiu Wu's fragmented soul dissipate in embarrassment, so how could a mere Inner Demon shake

his faith in his cultivation technique?

Peng!

Before Zhang Xuan finished his words, the Inner Demon vanished on the spot with a loud pop.

Since it was unable to beguile Zhang Xuan, its *raison d'être* had already vanished. As such, it could only vanish into nothing.

Before its disappearance, it was actually suffering a mental breakdown within. How in the world did he meet with this kind of a cold and impassive figure? If he had a choice, he would never go there again.

Wuuuuu... I want to go home...

Zhang Xuan's battle with the Inner Demon had only lasted a moment.

To the eyes of outsiders, they had only seen a thick streak of lightning falling upon Zhang Xuan. The thick streak of lightning did not seem to have caused any damage to him—he had not spurted blood nor trembled in pain. His body had simply jolted abruptly for a moment before falling still.

The next moment, a ray of golden light abruptly burst down from above, and innumerable flowers formed of Origin Energy fluttered in the air.

Luo Ruoxin was dazed for a moment before her eyes widened in shock. "This... He has already cleared the Heart Ordeal? But... how did he do it so quickly?"

The Heart Ordeal was the most difficult phase in the Saint Ascension Ordeal, so Luo Ruoxin had been clenching her fists tightly in anxiety, worried that he would not be able to overcome it. Yet, who would have thought that just a brief instant after the lightning fell on Zhang Xuan's body, he cleared the ordeal? This was too shocking!

Huala!

As the flowers of Origin Energy fell to the ground, the dark clouds in the sky gradually cleared, and a pillar of pure white radiance descended from the sky. It was as if someone had broken a hole in the sky, causing energy to leak from the heavens.

Shrouded amid the white radiance, the injuries that Zhang Xuan had sustained previously were healing at a visible pace, and his aura was also growing stronger and stronger with every passing second.

Upon seeing this sight, Luo Ruoxin heaved a sigh of relief before stepping forward.

Shortly after clearing the Saint Ascension Ordeal was the period when Zhang Xuan would be the most vulnerable. Even the slightest damage inflicted in this moment could claim Zhang Xuan's life. Within this span of time, she would have to make sure to guard him tightly so that no one could lay even a single finger on him.

"The descent of sacred light... Zhang shi has managed to become a Celestial Saint!" With reddened eyes, Zhang Yinqiu's tightly clenched fists finally opened up as the tension left his body.

With this, they would finally be able to defeat the Skyleaf King!

However, in that solemn moment, a frenzied laughter sounded.

"Hahaha... I have finally succeeded..."

Following which, the ground suddenly began trembling intensely. It was not just limited to the Saint Ascension Hall; it felt as if the entire Qiu Wu Palace was coming to life.

The Skyleaf King raised his hand, and a map gradually floated toward him.

In that moment, everyone suddenly felt a restraint acting upon them, as if they were going to be trapped within the painted world once more.

"It's over..."

In this moment, everyone's heart turned cold.

Zhang Xuan had managed to clear the Saint Ascension Ordeal, but he still required some time before he could become a Celestial Saint. If the Skyleaf King managed to escape from the Saint Ascension Hall, their plan to defeat him would end in failure. Instead, trapped within the painting, they would become easy prey that the Skyleaf King could pick on at his whim.

However, they had already expended all of their zhenqi in the previous fight, and they were unable to stop the Skyleaf King anymore.

Just a step away from success, who would have thought that they would be outdone at this critical moment?

"Hahaha, it's my victory! What Celestial Master Teacher or Celestial Saint, it makes no difference at all! You will only end up dying at my hands like the other ants."

Having succeeded in gaining possession of the Qiu Wu Palace, the Skyleaf King could no longer hold back the agitation in his heart. With a furious roar, he turned his sight toward the crowd.

They had humiliated him again and again over the past few days, and he had finally found an opportunity to return the favor.

Boom!

Raising his palm, he sent a powerful palm strike toward the young man seated on the Saint Ascension Platform—Zhang Xuan.

That was the fellow whom he harbored the greatest hatred towards. Not only did he attempt to steal something from his living quarters, he even had his ally destroy his physical body. No matter what, the Skyleaf King was determined to end his life right there and right then!

Hu la!

There wasn't anything extraordinary about the strength of the palm, but for some reason, it was able to tear through even space itself, opening up a black rift in its trajectory.

Gaining possession of the Qiu Wu Palace was equivalent to becoming the new master of the folded space. In other words, the Skyleaf King wielded absolute authority over the ancient domain. Within this space, even if his opponent possessed far greater strength than him, he would still be able to crush the other party easily.

"Damn it!" With a furious bellow, Zhang Xuan's clone rushed forward to stop the palm strike.

However, upon contact with the black rift, he was immediately ripped in two before falling back to the ground.

An ability that could even sever space was far beyond what Zhang Xuan's clone could deal with at the moment, even after his abilities were augmented from absorbing the entire Lightning Elemental Orb.

"It's over..."

Seeing how powerful the Skyleaf King's attack was, everyone felt their heart turning cold in despair.

Who would have thought that the only Celestial Saint after Kong shi would actually die in such a manner?

Just as everyone thought that it was Zhang Xuan's end, the young lady who had been standing guard beside the Saint Ascension Platform all this while, Luo Ruoxin, suddenly raised her gaze to look at the Skyleaf King with a frown of displeasure on her face.

"Humph!"

She flicked her hand lightly.

Kacha!

The incomparably powerful palm strike suddenly stopped in midair before dissipating entirely. In the following moment, the Skyleaf King suddenly found his Primordial Spirit being completely immobilized in midair, as if an ancient insect trapped within a fossil. Even the gleeful look from before had frozen on his face.

Unable to believe what was happening, the Skyleaf King roared fearfully, "How can this be possible? Y-you... Who the hell are you?"

He was not too sure how powerful he had become after gaining control over the Qiu Wu Palace, but one thing was for certain—even a Saint 7-dan cultivator would have been killed before the palm strike he had launched earlier.

Yet, with a casual flick of her hand, the young lady had actually dissipated his attack and sealed his movements completely... Just how powerful was she?

If she was so powerful, why hadn't she made a move from the very start?

"As long as I am here, none of you will lay a finger on him." Completely disregarding the Skyleaf King, Luo Ruoxin placed her hands behind her back and made a cold declaration before turning back to Zhang Xuan once more, perfectly composed.

The rest of you can fight to your deaths all you wish, but I will not allow a single one of you to hurt him!

"This..."

The faces of Wu shi and the others paled upon witnessing that scene.

They had traveled through the ancient domain with the young lady, and not once had they noticed anything extraordinary about her. Who would have thought that she was actually such a powerful expert?

It was truly bewildering.

"Can you see through her cultivation?" Guild Leader Han asked Wu shi discreetly.

With a bitter look on his face, Wu shi shook his head.

With his strength and eye of discernment, he was actually unable to measure the depth of the strength of the person standing before him!

In other words, the other party was much, much stronger than him, achieving a level that was beyond his understanding.

"But if she possesses such powerful strength, why didn't she save us back at the celestial palace? Why did she watch nonchalantly as we lost so many friends?" Guild Leader Han gritted his teeth in indignation.

"To an expert of her caliber, our existences might very well mean nothing at all." Wu shi sighed deeply. "Perhaps, in the very first place, the reason she chose to come to the ancient domain was Principal Zhang."

Even though he had not had much interaction with the young lady, he could tell through the nonchalant eyes of hers that she was not one who concerned herself deeply with those around her, much like an observer watching a commotion

impassively. It was only in affairs regarding Principal Zhang that the air of nonchalance around her would be broken temporarily.

How could a person like that possibly do something excessive as to save them?

Besides, the celestial palace was intended to be one of the trials set by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. If she had made a move then, there might have been unforeseen circumstances.

"This..." Guild Leader Han was rendered speechless.

Indeed.

As a cultivator advanced their cultivation and comprehended the essence of the world, life and death would gradually unravel before their eyes as an inevitable state of life. It was simply a natural cycle of the world—life was not something to be celebrated, and death was not something to grieve over either. Considering how Luo Ruoxin did not owe anything to them, she had no reason to interfere and save them either. Otherwise, she might end up finding herself being restrained by the rules of the world.

The higher one's cultivation became, the more fearful one would be of the heavens.

"Besides, it's not like she hasn't done anything at all. She was the one who had been dropping us hints all along, and due to that, Jiang Yuan even accused her of being the Skyleaf King," Wu shi said.

After a long moment of hesitation, Guild Leader Han finally nodded in response. "You're right."

While Luo Ruoxin had not helped them against the Otherworldly Demons, her advice had played a crucial role in helping them through the ancient domain. If not for her, they would not have been able to bypass the Black Sand of Oblivion or escape from the celestial palace back then.

Upon understanding all of that, Guild Leader Han was finally able to let go of some of the frustration he felt within. Glancing at the completely immobile Skyleaf King, he could not help but ask curiously, "To be able to seal the movements of the Skyleaf King so easily... how powerful do you think she is?"

"I think that she could very well be..."

At this point, Wu shi's face turned extremely grim.

“...a 9-star master teacher!”

Chapter 1086

You Are Kong shi?

"9-star master teacher?" Guild Leader Han's mouth twitched uncontrollably as his lower jaw slackened in shock.

There were not many 9-star master teachers even throughout the entire Master Teacher Continent, and every single one of them could cause the Master Teacher Pavilion to tremble with just a stomp of their feet. How in the world had a figure like that ended up joining them in their expedition?

Furthermore... how could she be so young?

Guild Leader Han couldn't help but ask, "Aren't you overestimating Luo shi's capabilities a little too much?"

It was true that Luo Ruoxin's strength felt unfathomable to them, so he would not doubt it even if Wu shi said that she was a Saint 7-dan expert, but... 9-star master teacher?

It would be no joke to say that 9-star master teachers were old monsters who had dominated their own sphere of influence for countless years. How could such a young lady possibly be a 9-star master teacher as well?

"You think that I am overestimating Luo shi capabilities? To tell you the truth, I think that I might even be underestimating her! This folded space was left behind by Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, and by gaining possession of the Qiu Wu Palace, it's not wrong to say that the Skyleaf King inherited his heritage. The fact that Luo shi was able to subdue him despite being within the Qiu Wu Palace so easily shows that her true strength doesn't pale much in comparison to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. What else could a person who wields that much strength be if not a 9-star master teacher?" Wu shi explained.

At this moment, Guild Leader Han suddenly recalled something and said, "This... Alright, what you said does make sense, but... if I recall correctly, there are some artifacts that can produce effects similar to this when driven by one possessing a unique bloodline. If I recall correctly, the Sage Luo Clan possesses one such artifact.

"Similar to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, the founder of the Luo Clan is also known for his prowess in spatial manipulation. The 'Dimension Silencer' that he left behind does have the ability to manipulate space, but... it requires one to possess a very pure bloodline in order to drive it..."

Wu shi nodded slightly before suddenly falling into a daze upon realizing what Guild Leader Han was getting at. "You are trying to say that... Luo Ruoxin... is the young princess of the Luo Clan?"

Seemingly in possession of some insider information, Guild Leader Han explained, "Indeed. If I recall correctly, the young princess of the Luo Clan is at a similar age as well. It is said that she succeeded in awakening her bloodline when she was only three, and she is known to be the offspring with the purest bloodline in the several dozen millennia history of the entire clan with the exception of the founder himself. She immediately received the acknowledgement of the Dimension Silencer and gained possession of it."

"Un, I have heard the same as well. It's said that despite her young age, the young princess possesses cultivation far superior to her peers, and her beauty is also matchless as well. However, it seems like due to that certain matter, she ended up falling out with her clan and left home." Wu shi nodded. "Now that you speak of it, it does seem very likely for Luo Ruoxin to be the young princess of the Luo Clan. With the Dimension Silencer and the sheer purity of her bloodline, even a true 9-star master teacher would have to tread carefully around her."

"Indeed! That would also explain her extensive knowledge of the ancient domain. If I recall correctly, the Luo Clan is ranked among the top ten of the Sage Clans, right?"

Wu shi nodded. "You're right. It can stand its ground even in the face of behemoths like the Glacier Plain Court..."

While the duo was communicating telepathically, the person they were discussing, Luo Ruoxin, continued standing in front of Zhang Xuan quietly. She watched as his aura grew stronger and stronger, and eventually, when he finally managed to break through his bottleneck as a Nascent Saint, she heaved a sigh of relief.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan was indeed unaware of the happenings outside. The sacred light that had gathered around him was warm and comfortable, putting him in a state of relaxation. At the same time, it also nourished his body, zhenqi, and soul.

Driving the Heaven's Path Divine Art, his cultivation surged ceaselessly. As if a Taotie 1 with an insatiable appetite, he greedily consumed the sacred energy around him.

Saint realm 1-dan primary stage!

Saint realm 1-dan intermediate stage!

...

In less than two hours, his cultivation had already reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle!

Hu!

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan opened his eyes.

So far, he had only managed to form the Saint 1-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, so he was unable to cultivate any further than that.

Taking an inward look at the current state of his body, Zhang Xuan could not help but tremble in agitation.

As expected of Celestial Saint... My Origin Core has already exceeded First Grade, achieving the level of Perfection!

Even before becoming a Celestial Saint, Zhang Xuan had already managed to raise the tier of his Origin Core to First Grade. However, after being acknowledged as a Celestial Saint, he found his Origin Core being further enhanced to a tier that far exceeded the level of First Grade, achieving a height that could only be described by the word 'perfection'.

It seems like Kong shi's Origin Core wasn't at First Grade either. He should have achieved the level of Perfection as well.

Having become a Celestial Saint himself, he instinctively understood that Kong shi must have gone through the same process.

Of the three phases of the Saint Ascension Ordeal, the Body Ordeal destroyed the Origin Core within one's body before reforming it with sacred energy, thus inducing a breakthrough in its tier, reaching a level far beyond what ordinary cultivators could ever achieve.

My cultivation is at Saint realm 1-dan, but my true fighting prowess should be comparable to a Saint 3-dan pinnacle expert. With my current strength, I should be able to easily defeat Feng Xun at peak condition! Zhang Xuan thought in excitement.

He had only defeated Feng Xun previously due to the latter suppressing his cultivation initially, so he had been able to grasp the momentum of the battle right from the start and overwhelm the other party. But now... having reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle, even if Feng Xun were to go at him at his full strength, he would still be able to subdue him easily.

As for Saint 4-dan cultivators... considering how Primordial Spirits were involved in the equation, the situation would become a little uncertain.

In order to face Primordial Spirit realm experts head-on, he would have to advance his soul cultivation first!

But the heritage of soul oracles that he had obtained was only up to Transcendent Mortal 9-dan, so it would be hard for him to progress any further than that. It seemed like he would have to find some time to visit the Ancient Domain of Soul Oracles that Mo Hunsheng had mentioned earlier. It would also be a good opportunity to check up on Lu Chong and see if he was facing any problems with his cultivation.

Huala!

Zhang Xuan stood up.

"You have awakened," Luo Ruoxin said. "How are you feeling?"

"Not too bad!" Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. Turning his gaze upwards, he could not help but be startled by what he saw. "What happened to the Skyleaf King?"

The Skyleaf King was frozen in the sky with a gleeful look on his face, not moving in the slightest. Despite his facial expression, fear could be seen in the depths of his eyes.

"He attempted to assault you, so I taught him a lesson," Luo Ruoxin replied nonchalantly, as if she had just accomplished something insignificant.

"You taught him a lesson?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

He knew full well how powerful the Skyleaf King was, so for Luo Ruoxin to be able to

subdue the latter so easily... Just how powerful was she?

In that moment, Zhang Xuan felt like he had gotten a glimpse into why Luo Ruoxin had said that it would be difficult for them to get together. Considering her strength, he was indeed a little too weak to stand by her side.

Having become a Celestial Saint, he had thought that he would at least be able to stand unrivalled among his peers. However, when he saw that Luo Ruoxin, who was around the same age as he was, possessed the strength to subdue the Skyleaf King so easily, the pride he was feeling a moment ago vanished without a trace.

No matter how fast his cultivation speed was, it had only been a single year since he started rising through the ranks. Given the sheer size of the Master Teacher Continent, the odds were that there were a significant number of astounding geniuses of his age group who possessed cultivation far surpassing him, especially among the offspring of the Sage Clans.

This further affirmed his previous thoughts. There was always a mountain higher than the other in the world, so he had to maintain a low profile. Otherwise, he might just end up dead without realizing what had come his way.

"This fellow has tried to kill me time and time again. Allow me to return the favor to him first." Smiling at Luo Ruoxin, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze toward the Skyleaf King with a ferocious glint in his eyes.

Vice Principal Ji Yan was right. Having just become a Celestial Saint, he was still able to tap into the vast energy within the Saint Ascension Platform to exert strength beyond his current capabilities. The Skyleaf King might have been a powerful Leaving Aperture realm expert, but with the current strength which Zhang Xuan wielded at his disposal, he was confident that he would be able to defeat the other party easily.

Hu!

With a snap of Luo Ruoxin's finger, the seal around the Skyleaf King was finally released. Zhang Xuan waved his hand, and an overwhelming surge of sacred energy immediately crushed the Skyleaf King against the ground.

"You..." Not expecting Zhang Xuan to become so formidable all of a sudden, the Skyleaf King widened his eyes in fear. Realizing that the odds were severely against him, he immediately gathered every ounce of strength he had and attempted to flee.

Having fused the map and the sphere together, he had managed to gain control of the Qiu Wu Palace. With the possession of such strength, he thought that he had finally reached the peak of his life. Yet, in the blink of an eye, he suddenly found himself at risk of being knocked down from the peak.

"Trying to flee? Humph!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes menacingly as he raised his palm furiously.

Through telepathy with his clone, he had already learned what had happened while he was on the Saint Ascension Platform.

Kacha!

The Skyleaf King cried in agony as he fell back to the ground once more with his Primordial Spirit convulsing uncontrollably.

Given Zhang Xuan's current state, the Skyleaf King might not necessarily have been a match even while utilizing the strength of the Qiu Wu Palace, so how could he possibly withstand Zhang Xuan's attack when all that was on his mind at that moment was to flee?

A moment later, the Skyleaf King was tossed into the Saint Ascension Platform. Exposed directly to the brilliant radiance of the sacred light, he screamed frenziedly in agony as he struggled desperately. As time passed, his screaming gradually quietened down until it eventually settled into silence.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan grasped forward, and a bundle of pure energy from the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit appeared in his hands.

The sacred light of the Saint Ascension Platform had the effect of destroying the consciousness of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. After being exposed to it for an extended period of time, the Skyleaf King had already lost his sense of self, turning into nothing more than a bundle of pure energy.

"Clone, you have done well this time," Zhang Xuan said with a smile before flicking his finger, and half of the bundle of energy flew into his clone's body.

Geji! Geji!

After absorbing the bundle of pure energy, his clone's aura began surging steadily.

His clone's strength was mainly derived from the Nine Hearts Lotus, so there was no need for him to cultivate at all. As long as his soul grew stronger, his fighting prowess would grow as well.

Absorbing only half of the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit, even if his clone was unable to reach Leaving Aperture realm, it should be sufficient to grant him strength comparable to a Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivator. Pairing that with his indestructible body, he would be a match for even a Leaving Aperture realm primary stage cultivator!

"I am very grateful to the rest of you as well." Zhang Xuan turned to Wu shi and the others with a smile. He divided the remaining energy bundle into several portions, and with light flicks, he directed them into their heads.

"Thank you, Principal Zhang!"

Knowing that Zhang Xuan had just offered them a hard to come by opportunity to push for a breakthrough, Wu shi and the others uttered their thanks before quickly sitting down to cultivate.

Boom!

Not too long later, Guild Leader Han was the first to achieve a breakthrough to Half-Leaving Aperture realm.

Shortly later, Wu shi followed suit.

As for Vice Principal Ji Yan and the others, while their improvements were not as exaggerated, they still managed to reinforce their Primordial Spirit realm cultivation significantly. All in all, the Skyleaf King's Primordial Spirit had managed to induce a substantial advancement in everyone's cultivation.

Feeling the raging power flowing through their body, everyone bowed deeply in gratitude. "Principal Zhang..."

Zhang Xuan turned to look at them with a solemn expression. "I hope that all of you will keep the matter of me being a Celestial Master Teacher and a Celestial Saint a secret."

For the time being, it was still better for him to keep this matter a secret. Otherwise, it could very well induce widespread fear among the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, thus compelling them into extreme actions. If so, his life could be in grave danger.

More importantly... low profile, low profile, and low profile! Important matters had to be repeated thrice.

"Don't worry, our mouths are sealed!" Wu shi and the others replied earnestly.

A matter concerning a Celestial Master Teacher and Celestial Saint had already far exceeded their jurisdiction. It was something that could very well affect the future of mankind, so they dared not speak of it lightly.

Hearing their guarantee, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. "You have my gratitude for this matter!"

After which, he flicked his wrist and tossed a bundle of Grand Intermittence Grass over. "Wu shi, I will leave it to you to forge a Grand Intermittence Pill to heal Vice Principal Tan Qing. For the time being, I intend to study the map and the sphere carefully to see if I can find a way to revert the old principal back to his original form."

"Alright!" Grabbing the Grand Intermittence Grass, Wu shi nodded.

Apothecary was one of his supporting occupations. While it was not the one that he was the most proficient in, he was at least sufficiently skilled to forge a Grand Intermittence Pill.

Hu!

After he was done making arrangements, Zhang Xuan headed straight up to the sphere and placed his palm on it. A moment later, his eyes narrowed in shock.

"You are... Kong shi?"

Chapter 1087

Kong shi's Warning

Zhang Xuan could see a tall figure reflected within the sphere. Dressed in a tall coronet and a long robe, the figure commanded a divine aura that seemed to harmonize with his. Instinctively, he realized that the figure within the orb was a person who had been recognized by the heavens as well, a Celestial Saint and a Celestial Master Teacher.

There was only a single person in history who had achieved such a feat—Kong shi.

Hu!

As soon as the thought emerged in his mind, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a powerful suction force coming from within the sphere. His consciousness was forcefully dragged out of his body and into the sphere.

Swiftly scanning his surroundings, he found that he had entered yet another folded space. It was not too large, around several dozen meters in diameter. Perhaps due to being coarsely made, the folded space was devoid of anything. All that could be seen was white space.

Except for a figure standing in front of him.

Assessing the figure before him carefully, Zhang Xuan could not help but frown in intrigue. "Kong shi, why are you..."

The previous time he met Kong shi at the Saint Ascension Platform, the latter was young and dashing, exuding a refreshing aura of youth. But the figure standing before him at this moment... his face was slightly bruised, and the long robe he donned was a little dirty. Summarizing it with a single word, unkempt. It was as if... someone had beat him up?

But... beat Kong shi up?

How could that be?

He probably left behind his will shortly after he successfully became a Celestial Saint, Zhang Xuan deduced.

Having just undergone the Saint Ascension Ordeal himself, while Zhang Xuan had already made a full recovery with the nourishment of the sacred energy, his body and clothes were still stained with dirt and blood. In that sense, he was in an even more unkempt state than Kong shi.

That was probably what had happened to Kong shi as well. It might only have been a lingering will, but it had assumed the same untidy look that he had back then.

Perhaps it was to serve as a reminder to the later generations about the callousness of the Saint Ascension Ordeal?

Waving his hand, Kong shi said with a grim expression, "I don't have much time here."

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

"If I'm not mistaken, you are also plagued with the Innate Fetal Poison, right?" Kong shi asked with a keen look in his eyes.

"Y-yes, that's right!" Hearing Kong shi raise the matter, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in agitation. Staring at Kong shi intently, he asked, "How can I resolve the Innate Fetal Poison? I beseech you to point a way out for me..."

He had intended to pose this question to Kong shi the previous time he met him, but the other party only left him with a "I am not alone in my path" and a hearty laugh before disappearing. Since Kong shi himself was raising the topic this time around, he would finally be able to resolve the issue once and for all.

As long as he could free himself of the Innate Fetal Poison, he would not have to charge forward so anxiously anymore. The nervousness that he was constantly plagued with could finally be put to rest as well.

"We'll talk about that later. I have more important matters to entrust to you at the moment." Kong shi shook his head before continuing. "The fact that you were able to ascend to become a Celestial Saint means that you are following the same path as me. Since that's the case, you are bound to find yourself faced with great trouble in the future. Thus, I want to offer you some advice here. In order to free yourself from destiny and reach a greater height, you will have to forge your own path. Walking

down a path paved by the wisdom of your predecessors can allow you to grow swiftly, but it will also limit your scope and potential!"

"Forge my own path?" Not expecting Kong shi to say such words out of nowhere instead of telling him the cure for the Innate Fetal Poison, Zhang Xuan was slightly bewildered.

"Indeed." Kong shi nodded. "You should have heard that I am in possession of a certain artifact known as the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, right?"

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

The Great Codex of Spring and Autumn was an unparalleled artifact that Kong shi wielded. Back then, it was using this artifact that he had been able to suppress the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and drive them out of the Master Teacher Continent. However, that artifact had vanished along with Kong shi, and its whereabouts were a complete mystery to everyone.

"The Great Codex of Spring and Autumn concerns the future of mankind. Since you are in the same plight as me, there's a very good chance that you will be able to drive it as well. By no means should you allow it to fall into the hands of others; this is very important, so remember this! Also, you have to make sure to be wary of..." Kong shi spoke with an extremely urgent tone, as if there was something that Zhang Xuan had to accomplish urgently.

As Kong shi spoke, he slowly raised his palm. However, before he could finish what he was about to say or do, Zhang Xuan suddenly heard a worried voice. "Zhang Xuan, are you alright?"

Zhang Xuan's body jolted as his consciousness returned to his body. Opening his eyes, he saw Luo Ruoxin standing before him with worry in her eyes.

Most likely, she must have noticed that his consciousness had been drawn out from his body, and worrying that something bad might have happened, she rushed over to check on him.

Zhang Xuan reached forward to squeeze the young lady's hand as he replied with a smile, "I am fine."

He had already heard about how Luo Ruoxin had protected him from the Skyleaf King

in the midst of his breakthrough. Even if her cultivation was far greater than his, even if her identity was a complete enigma to him, even if the path ahead was going to be tough, he had no intention of giving her up at all.

"It's good that you're fine." The young lady heaved a sigh of relief before flashing him a smile.

"Give me a moment, I need to check on the sphere first," Zhang Xuan said before turning his attention back to the sphere. A moment later, a helpless expression surfaced on his face.

Within the short span of time while he was conversing with Luo Ruoxin, Kong shi's will had already disappeared without a trace. It was as if his previous encounter with Kong shi had been a fleeting dream.

Zhang Xuan scratched his head frenziedly. Considering how Kong shi founded the Master Teacher Pavilion and is a figure who is deeply respected by countless master teachers, I thought that he would at least be more reliable than that. To disappear in the middle of his words, he is just as unreliable as my clone...

All he wanted to do was learn the cure to the Innate Fetal Poison, and yet, despite encountering Kong shi's will twice, the other party had ended up speaking about completely useless matters instead. Just the thought of it left him deeply stifled.

You told me to seek out the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, but I don't even have the slightest clue where it will be. How can I possibly find it and prevent it from falling into the hands of the others? Furthermore, who or what are you asking me to be wary of?

Look at Ancient Sage Qiu Wu! Despite being traumatized by me, he was at least able to finish most of what he wanted to say before dissipating. As the World's Teacher, aren't you a little too weak?

Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. It seems like Kong shi left behind his will shortly after he became a Celestial Saint, so his strength was nowhere on par with Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. But still, for his will to be unable to sustain itself long enough to finish his words...

It had not been easy for him to have an opportunity to meet Kong shi, and he had intended to uncover the secret to resolving the Innate Fetal Poison from the latter. Yet,

due to Kong shi's limited time, he ended up missing this chance as well.

Forget it... Knowing that there was no point brooding over the matter, Zhang Xuan decided not to think too much about it.

Ultimately, Kong shi had only been a Saint 1-dan cultivator when he left behind his will. The very fact that he could sustain himself for more than several dozen millenniums and speak with him was already an incredible accomplishment in itself.

Even if Kong shi was the World's Teacher, he was asking a little too much of the other party here.

It seems I only have myself to rely on for the Innate Fetal Poison, Zhang Xuan thought as he rubbed his glabella.

Sighing deeply, he turned his gaze to the sphere and thought, For the time being, I should cultivate this sphere first!

At this point, the sphere had already fused perfectly with the map, forming something similar to a globe. The various trials that they had encountered on the journey through the ancient domain could be seen on the globe.

Extending his consciousness into it, Zhang Xuan could feel the entire folded space being right at his fingertips. He could tell that as long as he cultivated the sphere, he would be able to gain control of the entire Qiu Wu Palace and obtain astounding strength.

Carefully placing his hand on the sphere, he began to infuse zhenqi into it.

Geji! Geji!

The following moment, Zhang Xuan could feel his will gradually spreading across the sky of the Qiu Wu Palace.

Be it the Unbounded World, the Black Sand of Oblivion, or the floating celestial palace, everywhere that he had been to appeared before him more vividly than ever.

In fact, he found that with just a single thought, he could easily alter the formations throughout the entire folded space, be it to intensify them or to calm them.

As expected! Cultivating the sphere grants me control over the Qiu Wu Palace, Zhang Xuan thought in agitation.

At the same time, he also found that he could store the entire folded space within the sphere at his whim.

In other words, one who had claimed possession of the sphere would be able to take the Qiu Wu Palace anywhere they went and enter it whenever they wanted.

Upon realizing this, Zhang Xuan's heart began leaping in excitement.

As the fragmented souls of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had already dissipated, there was no way for him to claim the other party's heritage anymore. However, if he could take the Qiu Wu Palace away with him and examine it carefully, he would definitely be able to advance his understanding of space significantly!

This could prove vital to him in advancing his cultivation in the future.

Zhang Xuan continued infusing his zhenqi into the sphere, cultivating every single portion of it.

After an unknown period of time, he opened his eyes once more. He had finally completed cultivating the key to controlling the Qiu Wu Palace.

Hu!

With a flick of his hand, he stowed the sphere into his storage ring.

Huala!

Shortly after stowing the sphere, he found the sacred energy that had augmented his fighting prowess earlier vanishing altogether, and his strength reverted back to Saint 1-dan pinnacle.

Kacha!

As if being drained of its energy, the Saint Ascension Platform split in two down the middle, and the divine aura that had shrouded it earlier dissipated without a trace.

Seeing how the divine platform a moment ago had been reduced into an ordinary

stone platform, Zhang Xuan shook his head. Even if I tossed this thing out into public, I doubt anyone would believe that Kong shi and I ascended to Celestial Saint on top of it.

Having accomplished its *raison d'être*, the Saint Ascension Platform no longer had any reason to continue existing.

Tossing aside the miscellaneous thoughts in his mind, Zhang Xuan turned around to face the others.

Wu shi was still in the midst of forging the Grand Intermittence Pill. There were quite a few errors in his forging technique, but through his sharpened senses as a Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert, it would not be too difficult for him to successfully forge a Grand Intermittence Pill.

Meanwhile, Guild Leader Han and the others were in the midst of recuperating from the battle and reinforcing their cultivation.

Seeing that they did not require his help, Zhang Xuan turned to the idle Luo Ruoxin and said, "I just met Kong shi."

Hearing those words, Luo Ruoxin nodded with a smile and said, "This is the place where he truly ascended to Celestial Saint, so it's perfectly normal for him to have left his will here!"

"Indeed. He advised me to forge my own path forward instead of blindly treading down the path paved by the wisdom of my predecessors."

After musing over the advice Kong shi had given him, Zhang Xuan found that there was some sense to what the other party had said.

Ever since he started cultivating, he had been relying on the Library of Heaven's Path to compile the Heaven's Path Divine Art for him. He had never tried to think deeper into the Heaven's Path Divine Art, and he had never attempted to innovate either. In a sense, he was indeed blindly treading down the path paved by his predecessors.

Luo Ruoxin nodded. "Kong shi is right. In cultivation, it is of the utmost importance that one finds a path that belongs solely to oneself."

"It seems like I can't cultivate as I did before..." As the World's Teacher and the founder

of the Master Teacher Pavilion, Kong shi must have noticed something peculiar for him to say such words. Thus, Zhang Xuan knew that he could not take the other party's words lightly.

"I know that it'll be difficult, but to become a true expert, it won't do for you to not have something of your own!" Luo Ruoxin said. "However, there's no need for you to rush into it at the moment. As long as you continue searching, you will surely be able to find your own path eventually!"

"You're right!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

In cultivation, one could only take a step at a time. At the very least, he had overcome one of the greatest hurdles ahead of him and successfully taken the first step into Sainthood.

No matter how difficult the path in the future would be, he was confident that he would eventually stand at the very peak of the Master Teacher Continent!

Holding the young lady's hand tightly within his, Zhang Xuan declared with unwavering determination, "Ruoxin, rest assured. No matter what kind of difficulties we face in the future, I will surely stand by your side until the very end!"

Chapter 1088

Luo Ruoxin's Identity

Wu Shi's proficiency as an apothecary was still decent, so not too long later, he succeeded in forging the Grand Intermittence Pill.

It was hard to tell whether it was due to the rise in his cultivation or the incredible maturity of the Grand Intermittence Grass using in the forging, but a total of five Grand Intermittence Pills were produced from that single cauldron.

Vice Principal Tan Qing had to consume three of them before his severed limbs finally recovered back to its original state, granting him the ability to move once more.

"Old principal, you are currently a long way from reaching Primordial Spirit realm, but your soul does possess exceptional resilience due to being bathed in the sacred light for two years. Why don't I impart to you a soul cultivation technique first so that your soul can enter this puppet for the time being? Meanwhile, I will try to find a way to forge a new body for you!" Walking up to Zhang Yinqiu, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out an Otherworldly Demon puppet.

Zhang Yinqiu's soul was far more resilient than ordinary souls due to it being nourished by the sacred energy lingering around the Saint Ascension Platform for two years. While his soul couldn't be compared to Primordial Spirits, it was still capable of existing outside of its body for an extended period of time.

As long as Zhang Xuan forged him a fitting body within this period of time, he would be able to live on like an ordinary human without any problem.

"This is... an Otherworldly Demon puppet?" Upon seeing the form of the puppet, Zhang Yinqiu immediately shook his head.

He had devoted his life to fighting against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, so how could he possibly allow himself to possess the body of an Otherworldly Demon puppet?

"Back then, Grandmaster Wu Yangzi used the flesh of the Otherworldly Demons to

forged these puppets. These are the very pinnacle of his craftsmanship!" Knowing that Zhang Yinqiu revered Wu Yangzi, Zhang Xuan quickly added.

"You are saying that... these puppets are personally forged by Grandmaster Wu Yangzi?" Zhang Yinqiu widened his eyes in shock before hurriedly turning his gaze towards the puppet.

His admiration for Wu Yangzi came from deep within his heart, and it was due to that that he was able to uncover so much information regarding the ancient domain while investigating Wu Yangzi's case.

After examining the Otherworldly Demon puppet for a while, he couldn't help but nod in admiration at the exquisite craftsmanship. However, he still eventually shook his head and said, "No matter what, I am still a master teacher. To live on using the flesh and blood of an Otherworldly Demon... I really can't do it!"

"Master, you aren't dead!" Just as Zhang Yinqiu was about to turn down Zhang Xuan's goodwill, an agitated voice suddenly sounded.

Zhang Yinqiu raised his head and saw a massive ape-like saint beast diving towards him with teary eyes.

"Byzantium Helios..." Upon seeing the saint beast's appearance, Zhang Yinqiu's eyes also reddened.

That saint beast was his tamed beast, the Byzantium Helios Beast!

Both the master and the subordinate thought that they were bound to be divided by life and death, and they hadn't really thought that a day would come where they would be able to meet one another again.

"Master, I really miss you..." the Byzantium Helios Beast knelt down and hugged Zhang Yinqiu. Tears streamed freely down his face, and in this moment, he bore no resemblance to the austere Guardian Saint Beast of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy whom everyone knew of.

"It seems like the old principal truly means a lot to him..." Seeing the state of the duo, Zhang Xuan fell into deep contemplation.

It was apparent from the Byzantium Helios Beast's reaction that he truly missed the

old principal. No matter what, they had still spent several centuries together, and the connection between them wasn't something that could be replaced that easily.

Thus, with a flick of his finger, Zhang Xuan returned the soul which the Byzantium Helios Beast had offered to him previously.

"Principal Zhang..." Noting the return of his soul tribute, the Byzantium Helios Beast quickly turned his gaze towards with young man with a look of disbelief in his eyes.

"From today onward, you will be free to make whatever choices you want. If you like, you can remain as the old principal's tamed beast." Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

To be honest, given Zhang Xuan's current strength, it was also pointless to attempt to retain the Byzantium Helios Beast by his side either. Since that was the case, he might as well grant the other party freedom so that the other party could remain by Zhang Yinqiu's side.

"Thank you, master..." the Byzantium Helios Beast kowtowed to Zhang Xuan in gratitude.

If not for the young man before him, he might very well never meet with the old principal ever again.

"Zhang shi, I have made up my mind. I will enter the Otherworldly Demon puppet for the time being. Previously, I have nothing to hold me back. You have already become the new principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and I believe that it will be brought to greater heights under your leadership. That's why I thought that it would have been better for me to die gracefully than to grasp so hideously to life..."

At this point, the old principal looked at his saint beast and smiled, "However... after seeing him, I found motivation within me to continue living!"

Zhang Yinqiu was a man who had devoted his entirety to the Master Teacher Academy, so till this day, he was still without a wife and offspring. On top of that, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had already found an incredibly talented individual to take over his place, so he thought that his existence served no purpose anymore. Yet, upon seeing the fondness that the Byzantium Helios Beast had for him, he realized that there were still much more he could do. It was still too early for him to rest.

Sometimes, a person didn't just live for himself but for others as well.

"Alright!" Hearing his agreement, Zhang Xuan nodded. Reaching forward, he imbued Zhang Yinqiu's soul with a unique energy and escorted him into the puppet.

Hu!

A few moments later, the puppet opened its eyes.

The Otherworldly Demon puppet didn't look particularly impressive on the surface, but it was still a true Saint 3-dan expert. In possession of such a body, Zhang Yinqiu's fighting prowess was significantly enhanced.

After dealing with Tan Qing and Zhang Yinqiu's affairs, Zhang Xuan led the group towards the entrance of the Saint Ascension Hall, where the seal stood.

With a snap of his finger, the sphere appeared once more. And with another flick of his finger, an opening appeared within the seal.

"Alright, let's go."

The group walked out, and before long, they met up with Mu shi, Feng Xun, and the others, who were waiting outside for them.

Upon seeing that Zhang Xuan and the others had returned safely together with Vice Principals Tan Qing and Ji Yan, a wave of cheerings broke out amidst the crowd.

Since the aim of their mission had been met, they decided to head out of the Qiu Wu Palace. Thus, Zhang Xuan raised the sphere up high, and a brilliant radiance shrouded the crowd.

Hu!

In the next moment, the crowd found themselves standing on the volcano on top of the Embracing Swallow Mountain.

Having finally managed to escape from the ancient domain, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a smile, he flicked his wrist, and a pile of treasures appeared before him. "Everyone, here are the treasures contained in the storage rings we have obtained thus far from killing the Otherworldly Demon Kings in the midst of our expedition. Since we have managed to get out from the ancient domain alive, it's only natural that we should split the spoils of war amongst ourselves!"

As valuable as the treasures from the Skyleaf King, Scarletleaf King, and the others were, it was with the collaborative effort of the entire expedition team that he was able to defeat them. Previously, when they were still in the ancient domain, it was unsure whether they would be able to escape with their life or not, so it made no difference whether they divided the spoils amongst themselves or not. However, since they had managed to overcome the ancient domain safely, it was only right for them to do so now.

"This..."

"Principal Zhang, you were the one who killed the Skyleaf King and the others. We can't possibly take these items..." Not expecting Zhang Xuan to take out everything within the storage rings, everyone was startled.

They couldn't help but feel a little moved by his generous gesture.

In the depths of their hearts, they knew that it was thanks to the young man before them that they were able to defeat the Otherworldly Demon Kings and escape from the ancient domain alive. Throughout the whole expedition, they hadn't accomplished anything much, so they felt embarrassed to take the items before them.

"We have entered the ancient domain as an entire team. Without the rest of you, I might not have been able to survive till now either, so there's no need to feel embarrassed..." Zhang Xuan smiled.

Upon becoming a Celestial Saint, his state of mind had changed as well.

As valuable of these artifacts were, it would be put to better use if it could raise the cultivation of more people. That would be far better than him monopolizing it alone.

"Alright then. We will be graciously accepting your gifts then..." Seeing that Zhang Xuan's mind was made up, the crowd decided not to turn him down any longer. Even after splitting the treasures amongst themselves, the gains of every individual was still very substantial.

The expedition team left Zhang Xuan with a huge bulk of the treasure, but these were of not much use to him anymore. After all, his greatest gain in the ancient domain was gaining possession of the Qiu Wu Palace!

Hu!

With a twist of the sphere, the folded space which the ancient domain was located in was secretly transferred to the surface of the sphere. From afar, it looked as if a map was inscribed onto the sphere.

After dividing the treasures, Wu shi and Guild Leader Han walked up to Zhang Xuan, and Wu shi said, "Principal Zhang, since this matter has been settled, we will be heading straight back to the Qingyuan Conferred Empire to report. Thus, we will be bidding you farewell here..."

"Alright. May we meet again in the future." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Before we leave, we would like to have a private chat with you. Is that fine with you?" Wu shi sent a telepathic message over.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan replied.

With a grasp of his hand, he created a seal around him to prevent anyone from listening in. After which, he turned to the duo and asked, "May I know what matter it is that you would have to keep it away from the ears of the others?"

Wu shi and Guild Leader Han glanced at one another hesitantly before Guild Leader Han stepped forward to speak, "Actually, it isn't anything much, but there's just one matter which... we would like to advise Principal Zhang on!"

"Advise?" Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully.

Just what kind of matter could it be for the both of them to offer him an advice privately?

"I'll get straight to the point then. Based on our observations over the past few days, I believe that Principal Zhang is interested in courting Luo shi, right?" After a moment of silence, Wu shi said.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded affirmatively.

It was perfectly normal for a gentleman to court a lady, there was no need for him to deny the matter before others.

Not to mention, the lady was the only person whom he had found his heart beating for, and he had intended to spend his entire life together with her.

"Then... Are you aware of Luo shi's background?" Wu shi asked.

"This... Based on what I have heard so far, it seems like she's related to Sage Luo Clan?" Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before asking.

"That is indeed what the both of us have deduced as well. In fact, we believe that there is a very good chance she's the young princess of the Luo Clan!" Wu shi revealed his deduction with a grim expression.

"Young princess?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Un. The young princess is known to have the purest bloodline in the Luo Clan ever since the time of the founder. Not only does she possess unparalleled talents, it's said that she has also inherited the supreme artifact of the Luo Clan as well, the Dimension Silencer..."

Wu shi hesitated for a moment before continuing, "Sage Clans pay particular heed to the purity of their bloodline, and as such, the choice of partner is extremely important to them. Not to mention, she is in possession of the most important artifact of the Luo Clan... So, under normal circumstances, it's impossible for her to be wedded to any outsiders!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan frowned. "If she's not allowed to be wedded to outsiders, is she to remain single for life?"

"For those whose bloodlines are of average purity, it wouldn't matter whether if they were wedded to outsiders or not. But for those whose bloodlines are as pure as the young princess of the Luo Clan... it would be difficult!" Wu shi shook his head. "Even if she were to get married, it would very likely be a matrimony amongst Sage Clans!"

"Matrimony amongst the Sage Clans?"

"Indeed. The cultivation techniques of Sage Clans mustn't be leaked to outsiders at any cost, so those of the Sage Clans often opt to marry amongst themselves. Furthermore, if one marries to another whose bloodline is as pure as one, there will be a greater chance for the offspring to possess equivalent or greater talent... Thus, I fear that your wish to get together with her will be fraught with difficulties. It is an arduous path you are treading on!" Wu shi hesitated for a moment before he replied.

He was not opposed to the both of them getting together, but he felt that there were

some things which Zhang Xuan should know beforehand.

It was simply not that easy to wed the daughter of a Sage Clan.

"More importantly... according to what I know, the young princess of the Luo Clan is already betrothed to an offspring of a very powerful Sage Clan! It is also for this reason that the young princess fled from the clan, and to this date, no one knows where she is..."

The one who spoke this time around was Guild Leader Han.

After having guessed Luo Ruoxin's identity, the various rumors he had heard regarding her surfaced in his mind. While it was only secondhand news, so there was a good chance it was unreliable, he still felt that it was important to inform Zhang Xuan of it.

If Zhang Xuan really wished to get together with Luo Ruoxin, he would not only have to go against the Luo Clan but the other Sage Clan which Luo Ruoxin was betrothed to.

Since they had braved through danger together, he mustn't allow Zhang Xuan to dive into the matter without understanding the risks.

"Betrothed to an offspring of a very powerful clan? What clan is it?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask.

"It is a clan which shares the same surname as yours!" At this point, Wu shi paused for a moment before continuing on.

"Zhang Clan of the Sage Clans!"

Chapter 1089

Not Even Able to Withstand a Single Blow

"Zhang Clan?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Indeed. Even amongst the Sage Clans, the Zhang Clan is ranked in the top three. It would be no joke to say that they are one of the strongest clans throughout the entire Master Teacher Continent. Their inner disciples, consisting of those who possess bloodline of superior purity, can easily reach Saint realm by sixteen and Leaving Aperture realm experts by twenty! If a comparison must be made, the strength of the Zhang Clan is definitely above that of the Luo Clan!" Wu shi remarked.

"The Zhang Clan is so formidable?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

"Indeed. If you really wish to court Luo shi, there's a good chance that you will find yourself standing against these two clans. But of course, given Principal Zhang's talents, it's only a matter of time before you are able to surpass the Sage Clans. However, before then, it'll be best for you to lie low. After all, your standing as a Celestial Master Teacher and Celestial Saint is simply too astounding. If the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe were to learn of this matter, they could very well dispatch the full might that they had at their disposal to destroy you, and that would put you in peril. Furthermore, you shouldn't take it for a given that all master teachers are willing to side with you. Alright, that's all that we wish to talk about. We'll leave it to you to decide the path you wish to walk down!"

Wu shi smiled. "If you really wish to stand against the two Sage Clans, feel free to approach us for help. No matter how difficult the task may be, we are willing to stand behind you!"

"Indeed, Principal Zhang. Regardless of your choice, we will back you unconditionally!" Guild Leader Han added.

As long as the young man before them didn't meet his end prematurely, there was no doubt that he would eventually achieve great things.

As powerful as the Sage Clans may be at the moment, give it a few hundred or a

thousand years, and they would surely be nothing before the eyes of this young man.

But at the moment, without sufficient strength, it was still best for the other party to lie low. Otherwise, great trouble could very well ensue.

"You have my gratitude!" Understanding that the both of them were only saying those words to him out of concern, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and thanked them.

He knew that Luo Ruoxin's background was bound to be atypical, but who knew that it would be that complicated?

It was no wonder why she was reluctant to accept him and had even warned him against it. If the opponent was going to be two Sage Clans, one would indeed have to stop and think twice.

"Principal Zhang has always been a wise and reliable figure, so I believe that you will be able to make the right decision yourself. Thus, we won't say any more than that. We will be waiting for your arrival at Qingyuan Conferred Empire, so til then, farewell!" Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, Mo shi, and the others clasped their fists and took their leave.

"Principal Zhang, we are returning straight to our academies as well. Before we leave, we would like to express our earnest gratitude to you. It's due to your leadership that we are able to overcome the ancient domain safely..." Wo Tianqiong and the others also walked over and bade their farewells.

"Principal Zhang, we will be returning to the Combat Master Hall now. We will make preparations for the arrival of your students for the exchange!" Jiang Yuan, Feng Xun, and the others from the Combat Master Hall did the same too.

Very soon, everyone went on their own ways, leaving behind just Zhang Xuan, Zhang Yinqiu, Ji Yan, Tan Qing, and Luo Ruoxin.

"Alright, let's return to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!"

Thus, the group began making their way back.

"Zhang shi, I heard from Feng Xun earlier that the students of our academy are intending to head to the Combat Master Hall for an exchange? May I ask what is the matter about?" Standing atop the back of the saint beast, Zhang Yinqiu hesitated for a

moment before walking up to Zhang Xuan to ask.

Exchange—this was something usually conducted amongst powers of equivalent strength. For one, it was not uncommon for the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to bring their students to Yunxu, Luoqing, and the other Master Teacher Academies so that they could learn from one another.

But the Combat Master Hall... One must know that the combat masters were existences capable of rivaling opponents who surpassed their cultivation realm. To bring their students there for an exchange... How was that any different from asking for a beating?

"When I was still a student, I established a student faction known as the Xuanxuan Faction, and I have specially conducted a few lessons which brought about a substantial rise in the overall fighting prowess of the students. I know that the Combat Master Hall is powerful, but I think that this is a good opportunity for them to see the world." Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"But even if you have specially conducted a few lessons, our students are still bound to be far from matching up to the geniuses of the Combat Master Hall..."

"The combat masters are simply too powerful. While it does broaden their horizon, I fear that it would end up as a crushing blow to the confidence of our students, and that would impede their further growth..."

Hearing those words, Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing couldn't help but shake their heads.

It seemed like Zhang Shi was still too young.

As a Celestial Saint, it was natural that he could defeat Feng Xun and the others as easily as if dicing vegetables on a chopping board. However, their students were just ordinary humans. How could they be able to match up to the likes of the Combat Master Hall?

If they were to really head there for an exchange, wouldn't they simply lose all of their confidence?

"Don't worry, I have already given them a heads up. In this exchange, it doesn't matter whether they win or lose. What is more important is for them to know that there's a

mountain beyond the other, as well as to give them a goal to strive for!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"This... Alright then!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan knew what he was doing, the crowd decided to go along with his decision.

The aerial saint beast traveled at an incredible speed, and within just a few days, the massive Hongyuan City had already come into sight.

"The rest of you can return to the Master Teacher Academy first. I intend to take a brief stop at my manor first..." Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and bade Zhang Yinqiu and the others farewell.

Before returning to the Master Teacher Academy, he wanted to first see how Wang Ying and the others were faring on their cultivation. As for the academy, there was School Head Mo and the others standing fort, so it was unlikely for anything to go wrong there. Besides, with the return of Zhang Yinqiu and the two vice principals, they were bound to have much to talk about, so Zhang Xuan felt that he should leave them to be.

Returning back to the manor, Zhang Xuan noted that Wang Ying and Liu Yang had made substantial advancement in their cultivation in his absence. They had started to cultivate the Saint Ascension Decipher, and their zhenqi had grown more condensed and substantial, granting them far greater fighting prowess than before.

Zhang Xuan divided the various treasures he had obtained from the ancient domain amongst them before calling Butler Sun Qiang over.

In the ten days of absence, Sun Qiang seemed to have grown even fatter. However, his cultivation remained the same as before—a clear sign that his heart was not on cultivating at all.

Naturally, Zhang Xuan gave him a good lashing yet again, but judging from past experience, it didn't seem likely that it would work.

Perhaps it was due to how reliable and driven his students were that the world gave him such a worrying butler for him to fuss over.

While Zhang Xuan was offering his students pointers and teaching his butler a lesson, Zhang Yinqiu and the others finally returned back to the Hongyuan Master Teacher

Academy.

"Even though Zhang shi is an incredible genius, he's still a little too young and lacking in worldly experience. It is truly reckless of him to propose an exchange between our academy and the Combat Master Hall... I honestly think that he's making too light of the matter!"

"My sentiments exactly. Which of the combat masters aren't top-notch geniuses, invincible existences within their own cultivation realm? If our students were to clash with them, there's a good chance that instead of motivating them, it would end up eroding their confidence and drive!"

Zhang Yinqiu, Ji Yan, and the others sighed.

Fighting a rival of the same strength as one could motivate one to strive harder so as to overcome the rival. However, when the gap between both parties was too great, it would only cause one to despair and fall into despondency instead.

This was simply how the human mind worked.

"How about this? Let's first pay that Xuanxuan Faction which he talked about a visit first, and in the midst of doing so, we can warn them about the strength of the Combat Master Hall once more. At the very least, if we prepare them for what that is about to come mentally, it'll cushion the trauma that they would suffer later on!" After a moment of silence, Vice Principal Ji Yan said.

"Indeed. We should emphasize to them that the exchange with the Combat Master Hall serves to show them what the peak fighting prowess within their individual cultivation realms are, and they should lower their positions beforehand so that they wouldn't be too dismayed by their lack of strength." Vice Principal Tan Qing nodded in agreement.

Before long, the trio had already made up their minds.

Considering that Zhang shi was currently the principal and he had already confirmed an appointment with the Combat Master Hall, it would be improper for them to attempt to veto his decision at this point. That would be undermining his authority and that of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. However, the least they could do was to give the students a heads up of what that was about to come and inform that they were visiting the Combat Master Hall to study and not to challenge them. If they

could ready their mindsets beforehand, the students wouldn't be too affected by the disparity in their fighting prowess.

"Alright, let's go over then!"

They had learned about the location of the Xuanxuan Faction's headquarter from Zhang Xuan on the journey here, so it didn't take long for them to arrive at their destination.

As Zhang Yinqiu was currently possessing the body of an Otherworldly Demon puppet, he chose to remain on the back of the aerial saint beast. On the other hand, Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing leaped down the aerial saint beast and walked towards the headquarter. However, before they could get past the entrance, they were already stopped by several students.

"May I know whom you are looking for?" one of the students asked.

"I am here to look for the person-in-charge for the Xuanxuan Faction..." Vice Principal Ji Yan was slightly surprised to see that the students didn't know who he was, but nevertheless, he still replied politely.

As most of the members of the Xuanxuan Faction were freshmen of the same batch as Zhang Xuan, they had never really seen the two vice principals before as the both of them had gone missing in the ancient domain two years back, so they were unable to recognize them.

"The person-in-charge? Alright, I'll invite him over right now..." While the student didn't recognize the two vice principals, he did notice that the two elders carried an extraordinary air of authority around them. Thus, he quickly left without much hesitation, and before long, he brought Ruohuan gongzi and Song Chao back with him.

The both of them were the founders of the Xuanxuan Faction, so naturally, they were their de facto leaders when Zhang Xuan wasn't around.

"May I know the reason for the arrival of our guests?" Seeing that the two elders possessed strength far beyond them, Ruohuan gongzi and Song Chao exchanged swift gazes before clasping their fists respectfully.

"I heard that you intend to visit the Combat Master Hall for an exchange?" Not bothering to beat around the bush, Vice Principal Ji Yan got straight to the topic at

hand.

"There's indeed such a matter. This is also the reason why the members of the Xuanxuan Faction has been working hard recently so as overwhelm the Combat Master Hall with our prowess and teach them a lesson!"

This matter was no secret. There was no one in the academy who was unaware of the matter, so there was no need to hide it from the two guests either.

"Overwhelm the Combat Master Hall?"

"Teach them a lesson?"

Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing exchanged gazes, and the knit between their eyebrows tightened.

Are you honestly telling me that you intend to teach that bunch of monsters from the Combat Master Hall a lesson? Do you have a death wish?

Truly, the ignorant knows no fear!

After a moment of silence, Vice Principal Ji Yan spoke up, "How about this? If you're that confident in your ability, why don't the both of us suppress our cultivation to your level and have a match with you?"

"You want to have a match with me?"

"That's right. Those from the Combat Master Hall possesses strength far superior to their counterparts, so it won't be easy for just anyone to defeat them. If you can defeat us when our cultivations are suppressed, it won't be an issue for you to face the Combat Master Hall. Otherwise... I hope that you can head there with the intention to learn from them instead!" Vice Principal Ji Yan said.

"Very well, I understand your sentiments. We, of the Xuanxuan Faction, won't bully you either..." Hearing the proposal made by the two elders, Ruohuan gongzi hesitated for a moment before turning his gaze towards a student who was sweeping the area not too far away. "You, come over here! Spar with these two elders for a while. Make sure to go easy on them so as to not hurt them..."

"..." Ji Yan and Tan Qing.

Seeing how that fellow, instead of sparring with them himself, ordered a student sweeping the area to fight with them instead, even instructing the latter to go easy on them... the two vice principals nearly exploded on the spot.

"Are all of the freshmen as arrogant as you? Very well, I sure am interested to see how powerful you are!" Clenching his jaws tightly, Ji Yan suppressed his cultivation to the same level as the sweeping student before beckoning with his hand, "Come!"

...

"Master, Vice Principal Ji has begun fighting with a student..." In the air, the Byzantium Helios Beast informed the old principal.

"Don't worry, the both of them know what they are doing. They won't go overboard..." Zhang Yinqiu replied with a reassuring smile.

He was just about to continue speaking when a gust of wind suddenly blew in the surroundings. Shortly after, he saw Vice Principals Ji Yan and Tan Qing flying over.

To his astonishment, the two Primordial Spirit realm experts had the mark of a broom imprinted firmly on their faces, and their clothes were soiled with dust and mud as well.

"What happened?" Zhang Yinqiu couldn't help but ask.

"We were defeated..." The duo replied with unspeakable embarrassment on their faces.

"The both of you were defeated?" Zhang Yinqiu widened his eyes in disbelief.

Two powerful vice principals actually got pummeled? How was that possible?

Seeing the incredulous expression that Zhang Yinqiu had, the faces of the duo reddened further as they added, "We weren't able to even withstand a single blow..."

Chapter 1090

Poison Hall Headquarters

Just recalling the offense of that sweeping student left the two vice principals on the verge of tears.

He was simply too powerful! It was as if he could peer right into the flaws of their movements. No matter how they attempted to dodge, the broom would accurately fall on their faces without fail.

Were it not for the fact that they possessed superior physical resilience as Primordial Spirit realm experts, they would probably have ended up bedbound!

Initially, they had thought that the sweeping student might just have been a hidden expert of the Xuanxuan Faction, so indignant with their loss, they had chosen another opponent to fight against. Yet, they actually lost even more tragically!

To think that they would be no match for the students when in the same cultivation realm!

"Zhang shi said that... he conducted a few lessons for them?" Seeing the pitiful plight that the two vice principals were in, Zhang Yinqiu suddenly recalled what the young man had said earlier, and his lips started quivering wildly. Just what in the world did Zhang shi teach them for the students to become so powerful?

Unable to take it any longer, he turned his gaze toward the Byzantium Helios Beast.

"Principal Zhang did conduct a few lessons for the students, but as for the exact details... I am not too sure about them either." the Byzantium Helios Beast shook his head.

He had spent most of his time in the Myriad Anthive Nest cultivating, so he was not too sure about the happenings within the academy.

"Never mind, let's find Mo Zhu and the others!" Seeing that the Byzantium Helios Beast wasn't too certain on the details either, the trio hurriedly headed toward the Elder

Hall.

Not too long later, they met Zhao Bingxu, Mo Zhu, and the others. The school heads were agitated to meet them once more, and the trio ended up explaining what had happened to them in the ancient domain. It took quite a while before the trio was finally able to pose the question that was on their mind.

"Ah. We had the Combat Master Selection not too long ago, and the Combat Master Hall ended up sending two parties to assess our students. However, they were defeated so tragically that they were completely sapped of their confidence. In fact, they even fled overnight just a day before they were supposed to fight with Principal Zhang's direct disciple, not bothering to bid any of us farewell beforehand..." School Head Mo swiftly brought Zhang Yinqiu and the others up to date on recent matters.

"Are you certain that it isn't our students who were sapped of their confidence?" The trio was frenzied by what they were hearing.

Just what in the world had happened to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy in the two years that they were trapped in the ancient domain?

"Not only so, Principal Zhang also managed to tame all of the spirit beasts and saint beasts on the Cloudmist Ridge, and he has distributed them among the students of the Beast Tamer School. Currently, just counting the number of Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beasts, we have more than twenty thousand of them. Also, Principal Zhang has conducted a few public lectures from time to time, and those have induced at least a twofold rise in the overall fighting prowess of our students..." Seemingly oblivious to the shock the trio was going through, School Head Mo continued explaining the various changes in the academy nonchalantly.

The more he spoke, the stiffer the bodies of the trio became. Eventually, before School Head Mo could finish his piece, the trio was already completely petrified.

It was just a moment ago that they had been worrying that Zhang shi was too young and inexperienced to manage the academy, but at this moment... they realized that they were the ones who were too inexperienced to manage the academy.

To think that they had even doubted the other party's capabilities, it sure was a huge farce.

...

Ten days later, Zhang Xuan stood on the deck of a massive ship, looking ahead into the distance. Within the compartments of the ship housed the tens of thousands of Xuanxuan Faction members, and the heart of every single one of them was leaping in excitement. They could not wait to cross blows with the combat masters with their refined skills.

Over the prior ten days, Zhang Xuan had conducted another five lessons for them before packing them into the ship to set forth for Qingyuan Conferred Empire.

Due to the enormous size of the ship, they had to find dozens of saint beasts before they were able to take off.

For the exchange with the Combat Master Hall, Zhang Xuan had only brought School Head Mo and Pavilion Master Mo Gaoyuan with him. Zhang Yinqiu, Ji Yan, and Tan Qing, seeing that there would likely be no problem with the exchange, chose to remain behind at the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to manage the matters there.

In truth, as Zhang Xuan knew that he would have to continue charging ahead in order to resolve his Innate Fetal Poison, as well as to get together with Luo Ruoxin, it was very unlikely that he would be able to spend much time in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy in the future. In fact, there was a good chance that he would not return there after heading to Qingyuan Conferred Empire, at least not in the short run. Thus, he had attempted to return the position of principal to Zhang Yinqiu.

However, the latter just would not agree to it no matter how he tried to convince him. Zhang Yinqiu was deeply concerned by the state he was in. He felt that if an incomplete person like him were to become the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, it might undermine its prestigious name.

As such, Zhang Xuan could only continue holding onto his title as the honorary principal. But of course, all of his responsibilities as the principal were still entrusted to Zhang Yinqiu to handle.

In the past ten days, Zhang Xuan had also paid a visit to the Blacksmith Guild to browse through their books in hopes of finding a way to heal the Golden Origin Cauldron, but it was a pity that the smithing mastery within the Hongyuan City was deeply limited. He had found a way to give birth to a new spirit within an existing artifact, but waking up a dormant one was proving to be far more difficult than he had anticipated.

It was to save them that the Golden Origin Cauldron had ended up falling into the state it was in, so Zhang Xuan could not allow it to die just like that. After careful contemplation, he decided to pay a visit to Qingyuan Conferred Empire to study more advanced smithing techniques before making a move.

...

Looking at the fleeting white clouds and feeling the raging wind before his eyes, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

The day before their team set forth, Luo Ruoxin had paid a visit to him and informed him that she still had matters to attend to, so she had to leave Hongyuan Empire for the time being, and she would not be able to meet him in Qingyuan Conferred Empire either. As reluctant as Zhang Xuan was, he could only nod in agreement.

In any case, since he had already learned of her true identity, he did not need to worry about being unable to meet her in the future.

There was one thing that Wu shi had said that he agreed deeply with—his current strength was still insufficient to go against the Sage Clans directly. If he wanted to be together with Luo Ruoxin, he would have to work a lot harder.

"Zhang shi... this is a gift that my father and King Huai prepared for you. Fearing that you would be reluctant to accept it, they told me to hand it over to you only after we left Hongyuan City!"

A crisp voice came from behind him, and Yu Fei-er walked up to Zhang Xuan's side.

For the exchange at the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall, Luo Qiqi, Hu Yaoyao, and she had tagged along as well. They were considered members of the Xuanxuan Faction as well, so they had been allowed to join the trip.

"Gift?" Not expecting Emperor Yu Shenqing and King Huai to prepare something for him, Zhang Xuan took the storage ring from Yu Fei-er's hands.

"Knowing that Zhang shi is proficient in the art of smithing and pill forging, they have prepared some ores and medicinal herbs within the ring. They aren't particularly valuable or rare, but they have prepared many portions of them so that you need not fret about being short of ingredients!" Yu Fei-er said with a smile.

As the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, Zhang Xuan was bound to have a bright future ahead of him. Naturally, Yu Shenqing and the others were reluctant to let go of this huge tree.

"Actually, I am the one who should be thanking your father!" Knowing their intentions, Zhang Xuan decided to accept the gift graciously.

Thinking back, had Yu Shenqing not given the Bodhi Seed to him, which he had used to grow a Bodhi Saint Tree within his folded space, there was a good chance that they would have been unable to overcome the Black Sand of Oblivion in the ancient domain!

He had been too busy over the past ten days, so it had slipped his mind to extend his gratitude to Emperor Yu Shenqing for the matter.

Choosing not to delve too much into this topic, Yu Fei-er looked at Zhang Xuan with a heated gaze. "Zhang shi, I have recently met with some troubles in my cultivation. May I ask you to give me some pointers?"

"Of course..." Zhang Xuan nodded.

While he was offering some pointers to Yu Fei-er, Luo Qiqi, Hu Yaoyao, and the others also dropped by. Thus, he decided to share the recent insights he had regarding cultivation with them as well.

After receiving the warning from Kong shi, he had not rushed into cultivating for the past few days. Instead, he had been thinking about the path that he intended to head down.

While he hadn't managed to create any formidable cultivation technique or battle technique, he did reinforce his cultivation further, allowing him to tap into his newfound strength more smoothly.

His insights were profound yet concise, making them valuable pointers to any cultivators. Luo Qiqi, Yu Fei-er, and Hu Yaoyao benefited greatly from his teachings.

A month passed in a flash.

The three ladies advanced substantially in their cultivation within that period of time.

After three months of cultivation, Yu Fei-er had managed to achieve a breakthrough to Half-Saint pinnacle, and Hu Yaoyao had managed to reach Nascent Saint pinnacle.

Of course, the one who had made the greatest advancement within that period of time was none other than Luo Qiqi. Two months ago, her cultivation had still been at Chrysalis realm pinnacle, similar to Yu Fei-er. However, within this short period of time, she had managed to advance her cultivation to Saint 1-dan pinnacle, putting her on par with Zhang Xuan!

Even Zhang Xuan could not help but be astonished by the rate at which she was advancing her cultivation. It seemed like she was indeed a person of great talent.

Her recent improvement was not just limited to her cultivation; her mastery at pill forging had also made significant progress as well. With her current proficiency, she could probably forge any grade-7 primary pill easily.

While the three of them were improving at light speed, Zhang Xuan's two direct disciples, Wang Ying and Liu Yang, weren't slacking either. Within a span of two months, Wang Ying had managed to advance from Chrysalis realm primary stage to Nascent Saint pinnacle. It was the same for Liu Yang as well.

It was due to them cultivating a simplified version of the Saint Ascension Decipher that their cultivation was not advancing too quickly. If it had been an ordinary Heaven's Path Divine Art, they would have long reached higher realms.

On the other hand, Sun Qiang's progress was still the slowest of them all as his heart was not in cultivating. Nevertheless, with Zhang Xuan's spot-on guidance, as well as the vast resources he had available to him, his progress was still much faster than the normal students of the academy.

At this moment, he had already reached Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle, just a step away from Chrysalis realm.

After a month of cultivating, Zhang Xuan had fully reinforced his Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivation. Even though he had not achieved a breakthrough, his true fighting prowess could already be said to be invincible among all cultivators beneath Primordial Spirit realm.

More importantly, he had found that his Soul Depth had also increased quite a bit after the Saint Ascension Ordeal, rising from the initial 21.1 to 23.1.

The difficulty in raising one's Soul Depth was not constant. Instead, just like cultivation, it became increasingly harder to raise one's Soul Depth the higher it was. Raising one's Soul Depth from 1.0 to 3.0 wasn't difficult, but raising it from 21.1 to 23.1 required at least several dozen times the effort required for the former.

Even so, if not for the Heart Ordeal being too easy, the growth of Zhang Xuan's Soul Depth would surely have been more than that.

As Zhang Xuan had spent most of the journey cultivating, he did not converse much with others. After an entire month of traveling, a humongous city finally came into sight.

The capital of Qingyuan Empire, Qingyuan City!

...

As Zhang Xuan and the others arrived at Qingyuan City, Poison Master Bai Ting and Poison Master Hai Mingjin finally arrived at the Poison Hall headquarters with Wei Ruyan.

Chapter 1091

Tome of Poison Legacy

The headquarters of the Poison Hall was located amid a massive mountain range. Unlike the other branches, which were concealed by formations, it was an enormous city that extended for several thousand kilometers, exposed in the open.

It had an economy of its own, producing and selling its own resources, reminiscent of a mini kingdom.

Upon seeing the majestic city before his eyes, Bai Ting couldn't help but remark, "It is said that vast majority of the mountain range has been laced with lethal poison, and any personnel who isn't a poison master of the Poison Hall would be swiftly poisoned to death. As such, there is no need for the headquarters to conceal itself from the eyes of the world at all."

The Poison Hall was a feared existence throughout the Master Teacher Continent. Thus, for safety considerations, most branches were concealed within a formation so that the other occupations would not be able to find it.

However, it was different for the headquarters. It was in plain sight amid the mountain range, not concealed by any formation at all. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the mountain was filled with countless poisonous worms and venomous beasts, anyone who wished to enter the Poison Hall headquarters would have to pay a heavy price.

This was also why, even though the location of the Poison Hall headquarters was common knowledge, no one dared to make a move on it. Even the Master Teacher Pavilion would have to think thrice before launching a crusade against it.

"I wonder if the day will come when poison masters are able to walk beneath the light once more, just like the other occupations..." Hai Mingjin sighed as he shook his head bitterly.

Even though the headquarters were built in the open, it still had to be constructed in the depths of a mountain, different from the other occupations, which were located in prosperous and majestic cities.

The cold and sinister image of poison masters was simply too deeply imprinted into the minds of the populace, causing them to be fearful of poison masters. Such a point of view was not something that could be changed easily.

"I also hope that such a day will eventually come. Fortunately, it seems to be within sights!" Glancing at the young lady behind whom he had carefully embraced with his zhenqi, a gentle smile surfaced on Bai Ting's face.

Ever since leaving Jingyuan City, they had flown for nearly two months without rest, but the young lady still showed no signs of awakening. Furthermore, the poisonous aura that was emanating from her body only seemed to be getting stronger and stronger.

Were it not for the antidotes that she had provided them back when she was still conscious and disguised as Sun Qiang, even with their incredible resistance to poison as 7-star pinnacle poison masters, they would have already been poisoned to death by now.

For the mere aura she emanated passively to be intolerable for poison masters of their strength, the Innate Poison Body sure was fearsome!

Unique constitutions were something that came innately with one's birth, so there was nothing they could say about that. However, what had truly impressed them was the deep level of understanding the founder possessed regarding the use of poison.

On their journey to the Poison Hall headquarters, they had been musing over the poison knowledge that the founder had imparted to them previously. The deeper they delved into the knowledge, the more fearsome they realized that the founder was. It could be said that the knowledge that they had gained over the past two months was far more than what they had learned in the previous several dozen years! On top of that, the antidote that they had been given was truly miraculous. It was no joke to call it the antidote to all poisons!

Not only was it able to neutralize the poison emanating from the young lady, it could even curb the toxins from the poisonous worms and venomous beasts on the mountain range!

A few days ago, Bai Ting had been bitten by a poison worm, and they had thought that he was a goner. However, shortly after consuming the antidote, he managed to make a

full recovery from the poison! To think that a simple pill would actually be effective against a myriad of poisons... Even though they were seeing it with their own eyes, they still couldn't help but find it inconceivable!

If not for the antidotes that they were given, they would have probably died multiple times before they could come to this point.

"As long as the founder awakens and regains her full strength, it won't be difficult for us to win the acknowledgement of the other occupations. The Poison Hall has never suffered from a lack of experts, but it's a pity that none of them are willing to submit to the other, so they end up building and ruling over their own factions instead. This has led to the Poison Hall being severely segregated, and we are unable to stand our ground before the other occupations. As a result, we have been forced to hole up in remote places, unable to stand in the light."

Recalling the various happenings in the Poison Hall over the past few centuries, Hai Mingjin couldn't help but sigh.

Truthfully, the Poison Hall did not start out in such a manner. At the very start, they shared the sunlight along with the other occupations, and poison masters didn't have to hide their identity from the others out of fear.

The Poison Hall had ended up in its current plight was because there had been no single poison master who was outstanding enough to take over the position of the head of the Poison Hall after the passing of their founder.

As the rules governing the Poison Hall were not as strict as that of the other occupations, it was not uncommon for poison masters to kill one another. Furthermore, they had no particular standard to the disciples that they accepted, thus resulting in there being both kind-hearted individuals and evildoers amid their ranks. Due to such circumstances, the strength of the Poison Hall had been on a constant decline, thus resulting in the current plight it was in.

If there was a person whom everyone in the Poison Hall was willing to recognize and submit to, their plight could very well have been very different. Perhaps, they might even have reached the same level of prosperity as they had achieved back then.

"Let's not get ahead ourselves for the time being; the current Poison Hall seems to be very different from how it used to be. I have informed my teacher about my arrival in

advance, and out of safety considerations, I decided not to inform my teacher about the founder. Even so, my teacher still told me to be very careful when heading over and that I should make sure not to catch anyone's attention. It appears that the Poison Hall is currently caught in an intense faction rivalry, and even my teacher is helpless to stop it." Bai Ting sighed.

"Your teacher? Do you mean Myriad Poison Eminence, Lin Jianghai?" Hai Mingjin asked.

Even though Bai Ting was his close friend and they had both come from the same Poison Hall, the other party had never really told him about his heritage before. He had only managed to fathom a guess from the other party's poison arts.

"Indeed, my teacher is Poison Master Lin Jianghai. I have studied under him for thirty years, but due to my lacking talent, I was unworthy of inheriting the essence of his heritage. Otherwise, I would have been an 8-star poison master by now." As soon as Bai Ting spoke of his teacher, his voice immediately became very respectful.

He felt deeply indebted to his teacher.

Without his teacher, he would not be. Even if he was not his teacher's direct disciple, the debt that he owed his teacher was still something that he could not hope to repay in his lifetime.

Recalling the various information concerning the Poison Hall headquarters, Hai Mingjin could not help but comment. "The Poison Hall headquarters consists of the Two Guardians, Four Eminences, Twelve Poison Kings, and 72 Tier-1 Hall Masters. Even the weakest of these experts is at 8-star pinnacle. The Myriad Poison Eminence is ranked in the middle of the Four Eminences, and even the weakest of his direct disciples is an 8-star poison master. Those who manage to become his disciple are the most outstanding of all poison masters, and they are deeply envied by others!"

Even though he was only a 7-star pinnacle poison master, he had been looking forward to visiting the headquarters, so he had read quite a few books regarding it. As such, he had a rough idea regarding the various powers within the headquarters.

As there had not been a single poison master who could win the respect of everyone else, the seat of the hall master had been empty for countless years. The affairs within the Poison Hall were basically dealt with by the Four Eminences, and as for the Two

Guardians... they often spent their days wandering the lands, so it was extremely hard to contact them. Even the poison masters of the headquarters had rarely seen them around.

As such, the Four Eminences were known to be the pinnacle of authority and power within the Poison Hall.

As one of the disciples of the Myriad Poison Eminence, even if Bai Ting was not a direct disciple, he was still allowed to travel in and out of the Poison Hall headquarters freely.

Otherwise, given that both of them were mere 7-star poison masters, they would have been shut out at the entrance.

"Alright, let's hurry up and enter the city. The poison aura within the founder's body is running out of control. If we don't suppress it soon, I fear that her life might be in danger!" Bai Ting urged before proceeding ahead with Wei Ruyan.

The city in the Poison Hall headquarters was not any much different from the capitals of the kingdoms and empires outside. On top of poison masters, there were also ordinary civilians walking around.

Walking through the city, Bai Ting and Hai Mingjin could not help but glance at one another in confusion.

Usually, the main streets should have been bustling with life, but there was not a single soul in sight. Shops at both ends of the streets were tightly shut, and there were no vendors or anything of that sort. It was cold and desolate. Did something happen?

But that should not have been the case!

If the Master Teacher Pavilion were to make a move on the Poison Hall headquarters, it would have surely caused a huge commotion throughout the Master Teacher Pavilion, and they could not possibly have been unaware of the matter. So, that was unlikely to be the case.

But... other than the Master Teacher Pavilion, what else could sap the life out of the massive Poison Hall headquarters?

"Let's continue heading in!" Hai Mingjin proposed.

"Un." Bai Ting nodded.

At that point, a voice suddenly sounded. "Is the person ahead of me Junior Bai Ting?"

The duo raised their heads and saw a middle-aged man flying over.

Perhaps due to his hunched back, the middle-aged man had a short stature of roughly 1.6 meters. He did not seem like a particularly impressive figure, but the eight stars on the emblem in front of his chest showed that he was not a person whom one should underestimate.

Upon seeing the other party, Bai Ting immediately clasped his fist and bowed. "Senior Yuan Ling!"

Hearing that name, Hai Mingjin had the fright of his life. "Yuan Ling? Could he be the 8-star pinnacle poison master who once succeeded in poisoning a Saint 8-dan saint beast to death?"

He did not know too many 8-star poison masters, but Yuan Ling's reputation made it impossible for him to not know of the other party.

As an 8-star pinnacle poison master, Yuan Ling was one of the 72 Tier-1 Hall Masters. His greatest known feat was to have concocted the 'Cloudsmoke Powder'. Colorless and odorless, the Cloudsmoke Powder warped into the form of a cloud when scattered, allowing it to drift along with the wind. With a sufficient dosage, it would be lethal even to a Saint 8-dan expert!

It was said that Hall Master Yuan Ling was once pursued by a Saint 8-dan saint beast, and left with no choice, he had released the Cloudsmoke Powder and poisoned the latter to death.

It was due to this battle that he had become well-known throughout the Empire Alliance. There was no one among the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Poison Hall who knew not of his name.

Who knew that such an incredible figure was actually Bai Ting's senior? It was truly shocking to think of it!

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. Teacher heard that you have reached Leaving Aperture realm and intend to take the 8-star poison master examination, so he had

me fetch you!" Yuan Ling smiled.

Due to Zhang Xuan's advice, Bai Ting had not revealed the matter regarding the founder yet, using his intention to take the 8-star poison master as a pretext to enter the Poison Hall headquarters instead. This way, it would guarantee them a safe passageway into the Poison Hall without any trouble.

"Thank you, senior. Right, weren't you dispatched to the Huaijin branch? Why are you at the headquarters as well?" Bai Ting asked curiously.

Under normal circumstances, the heads of the regional Poison Hall branches were not allowed to leave their post. Thus, it was peculiar for Yuan Ling to be in the headquarters and even fetching him personally.

"You haven't heard of the matter yet?" Yuan Ling was taken aback. A moment later, he nodded in realization and said, "Right, it has been many years since you left the headquarters, so it's understandable that you are unaware of the current situation. Right Guardian Shen Jue returned recently, claiming to have found an artifact of the founder.

"Using this, he intends to organize the Grand Conference of Poison Masters and appoint himself as the new hall master. As such, the 72 Tier-1 Hall Masters were all summoned to the headquarters to attend the conference, and the crowd in the city has also headed over to watch the commotion. That's why the streets are completely empty today!"

"Right Guardian Shen Jue?"

"An artifact of the founder?"

The duo frowned upon hearing those words. Intrigued, Bai Ting continued asking, "May I know... what artifact it is?"

"It's the founder's 'Tome of Poison Legacy'!" Yuan Ling replied.

Chapter 1092

The Founder Arrives

"Tome of Poison Legacy?" Bai Ting and Hai Mingjin leaped in astonishment.

According to the rumors, the Tome of Poison Legacy was an artifact personally written by the founder of the Poison Hall. She had detailed all of the secrets of her poison arts within the book, and it was the artifact that all poison masters craved to obtain. However... it was said to have disappeared from the face of the world along with the founder.

After the founder died, there were quite a few hall masters who had taken over after her. However, as they had not inherited her true heritage, they were unable to receive widespread acknowledgement among the poison masters, resulting in the current chaos within the Poison Hall.

For the longest time, everyone had thought that the Tome of Poison Legacy had disappeared for good, but who would have thought that Right Guardian Shen Jue would actually manage to retrieve it!

"Indeed! With this artifact, he can be officially inaugurated as the new hall master of the Poison Hall without any doubts about his legitimacy. Just that... Forget it. Let's not talk about this any further. You'll understand once you meet teacher anyway!"

Yuan Ling was still intending to continue speaking when he paused for a moment and swallowed his words. Beckoning the both of them to follow him, he flew ahead.

The duo followed him closely.

As Saint 5-dan experts, their flight speed was beyond ordinary. It did not take them long to arrive at a vast residence located at the center of the city.

With Yuan Ling taking the lead, they walked toward the hall that their teacher had taught them in the past. Before they could enter it, arguing could be heard echoing from within.

"He's using that as an excuse to climb over us! Why should our teacher do it? At the very most, we'll just fight it out with him!"

"He's going too far, we can't just sit silently by the side and let him do whatever he wants!"

"Just because he says that it's the Tome of Poison Legacy, are we supposed to accept it like that? Is there anyone who can verify his words? I remember that our teacher had a grudge with him back then. He must be trying to make use of this matter to get rid of his rivals so as to successfully promote himself to hall master!"

"It's not like we don't know how narrow-minded that Right Guardian of ours is. With such a card in his hand, he's bound to make a move against us."

...

Walking into the room, they saw dozens of poison masters gathered, each of them with an indignant look on their face.

Swiftly scanning the room, Bai Ting noted that they were all the seniors and juniors who had studied alongside him back then. Most of them had already attained the strength of 8-star poison masters.

In the center of the room sat an elder who was dressed in plain clothes. He had an elusive aura that could hardly be felt, and his breathing was so indistinct that it was impossible to tell whether he was alive or not. Had he not been seated in the center of the room, one could have overlooked him very easily.

Intrigued, Hai Mingjin secretly used his Spiritual Perception to scan the other party, and the result that he got left him startled.

To his shock, his Spiritual Perception actually reflected that the space that the plain-clothed elder took up was completely empty!

What incredible strength he wields... Hai Mingjin narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

It was obvious that the person before him had achieved strength far beyond his imagination, such that even his Spiritual Perception was incapable of perceiving the other party's existence.

An expert of the other party's caliber did not need to even raise his hand to destroy him. Just a single thought, and his soul would have been helplessly crushed. There was the huge disparity in their strengths.

It was unimaginable how powerful the elder would be if he were equipped with poison!

Truly terrifying!

"Teacher, Junior Bai Ting is here!" Ignoring the crowd's argument, Yuan Ling stepped forward and reported.

"Un." The elder nodded before turning his gaze to Bai Ting. "I thought that you wouldn't have been able to make a breakthrough when your heart turned cold after the incident. Not bad, you are still able to qualify as an 8-star poison master in the end. You didn't let me down!"

"Teacher..." Bai Ting's eyes reddened as he stepped forward and kneeled on the ground.

Ever since leaving the headquarters, he had never met his teacher because he felt too ashamed to face him. Upon seeing his teacher once more, the emotions that had welled up within him for many years could not be contained.

The elder smiled. "Alright, you are going to be an 8-star poison master very soon, so you shouldn't cry over minor matters like this!"

"Yes!" Bai Ting nodded. Standing up, he turned a confused look to his teacher and asked, "Teacher, I happened to overhear someone saying that someone wants you to do something... If I may ask, what does that mean?"

Judging from how indignant everyone was, it was bound to be nothing good.

"It's nothing much." The elder waved his hand before sighing deeply. "You should focus your effort on taking the 8-star poison master examination while you are here and leave as soon as you're done. The Poison Hall is no longer the safe place you know of. We might face bloodshed very soon, so escape as far as you can."

"This..." Bai Ting frowned in confusion.

His teacher was one of the Four Eminences, so what could have happened for him to speak of such depressing words?

Furthermore... shouldn't Shen Jue's retrieval of the Tome of Poison Legacy and inauguration as the new hall master have been a joyous event?

Noting the confusion in Bai Ting's eyes, an 8-star poison master stepped forward and explained, "I believe you should have heard the news that Guardian Shen has found the Tome of Poison Legacy and intends to become the new hall master, right?"

"Yes!" Bai Ting replied with a nod.

Senior Yuan Ling had just informed him of the matter.

"The Tome of Poison Legacy is an artifact left behind by the founder, and it carries lethal poison. There is only one way to open it, and it's through the Life Tribute ritual. Guardian Shen intends to have our teacher conduct the ritual," the 8-star poison master said through gritted teeth.

Hearing those words, Bai Ting's eyes widened in shock.

Poison masters had a habit of sealing their manuals using lethal poison. In order to open such manuals, one would have to possess the ability to undo the poison. Otherwise, one would have to wear away the poison with life.

In other words, it was using human lives to wear away the poison on the manual. If one was not enough, two. If two were not enough, three... There was bound to be a limit to the poison laced on the manual, so there would come a point where it was sapped dry.

This was also what the Life Tribute ritual was!

Life Tribute was an extremely callous ritual, and it undermined the dignity of life. This was one of the practices that had the poison masters deemed as a type of demonic art, causing it to be snubbed by the orthodox occupations.

"But... why our teacher?" Bai Ting asked through gritted teeth.

His teacher was one of the Four Eminences, so why would they sacrifice such an esteemed individual for the Life Tribute?

"Our teacher had a conflict with Guardian Shen many years ago, so we believe that this is Guardian Shen's attempt to get back at him. Furthermore, the poison on the Tome of Poison Legacy is indeed too potent, such that it's impossible for even normal humans to approach it. As such, it can only be neutralized by 9-star poison masters. It's for this reason that Guardian Shen specifically singled out Teacher so as to further build his prestige. Through this incident, he wishes to send out a stern warning to the entire Poison Hall so that none dare oppose him!" the 8-star poison master replied with clenched fists.

While Life Tribute could wear away the toxicity of the poison, its effectiveness was also dependent on the strength of the tribute. Considering the potency of the poison that laced the Tome of Poison Legacy, even if they were to sacrifice twenty thousand ordinary humans, it still would not wear away the poison.

Only 9-star poison masters wielded sufficient strength to wear away the poison on the Tome of Poison Legacy. Anyone other than that would not do.

"Since he's obviously using this matter to get back at us, can't Teacher just turn him down?" Bai Ting asked anxiously.

"Teacher can indeed turn him down, but Guardian Shen... is forcing Teacher to comply with his demands in the name of greater good!"

"In the name of greater good?"

"Indeed. He promised all of the poison masters that as long as the Tome of Poison Legacy is opened, he will pick out the easier content and make it public knowledge for all poison masters to study, thus substantially raising the overall prowess of the Poison Hall. Through this promise, he is attempting to sway public opinion against our teacher, thus forcing Teacher to conduct the Life Tribute ritual. All of the poison masters in the headquarters are currently loitering around the area. They are claiming that they intend to witness the inauguration ceremony, but in truth, most of them are just keeping a surveillance over the manor, fearing that Teacher will attempt to escape," the 8-star poison master said with reddened eyes.

Only in trying times would one be able to see through the hearts of those around them.

The poison masters who were close with his teacher or usually fawned on him had all fled as far as they could, leaving behind only his students to guard the area.

Bai Ting could not help but clench his fists tightly as well.

Indeed.

With such terms to draw the other poison masters in, his teacher would have no choice but to become the sacrifice. Otherwise, with public opinion working against him, it would not be long before he fell from grace.

Interrupting the words of the poison master, the elder sitting in the center of the room waved his hand.

"Alright, I have already made up my mind on this matter. After I'm dead, don't come to this manor anymore. Stay as far away as you can so that we will at least be able to preserve our heritage."

No one would dare think of laying their hands on his disciples while he was alive, but once Shen Jue got his way, there was no doubt that he would turn his eyes to his disciples next.

The Poison Hall was not as strictly bound by rules as the Master Teacher Pavilion. In here, strength spoke the loudest. Without sufficient strength, the only fate one would face was death.

"Teacher..." Upon hearing those words, those present could not help but feel disconsolate. Even Yuan Ling's eyes had reddened as well, and a sorrowful silence drifted in the air.

At this moment, Bai Ting's voice abruptly broke the atmosphere.

"Teacher, actually... you need not sacrifice yourself. It might not be that easy for Guardian Shen to become the hall master either!"

"Hmm?"

Hearing those words, everyone quickly turned their gazes over. Even the elder could not help but frown.

"Junior Bai, why would you say such words?" Yuan Ling asked.

"It's nothing much. If it was any other occasion, Guardian Shen would indeed be

qualified to become the hall master with his contribution of retrieving the Tome of Poison Legacy, and no one would dare say anything against it. However... I fear that the tome won't be sufficient now!" Bai Ting spoke confidently.

"He won't be able to become the hall master even with the Tome of Poison Legacy? What do you mean by that?" Yuan Ling frowned, unsure of what Bai Ting was driving at.

The others were bewildered by Bai Ting's words as well.

What was the Tome of Poison Legacy? An artifact that the founder had left behind. To draw a parallel, it was equivalent to Kong shi's Great Codex of Spring and Autumn; it was the supreme treasure of the Poison Hall. It could be considered the symbol of authority of the founder, and anyone in possession of it would receive the acknowledgement of all poison masters.

It was precisely due to Shen Jue obtaining the Tome of Poison Legacy that his teacher was put in a spot at the moment.

Yet... his junior was saying that even a person in possession of the Tome of Poison Legacy was unqualified to become the hall master? Then... who in the world was qualified to become the hall master?

"Junior Bai, I have no idea what you are getting at. The Tome of Poison Legacy is the supreme artifact of the founder, and anyone in possession of it will naturally gain the greatest authority within the Poison Hall." The 8-star poison master shook his head. "Unless the founder appears at this moment, there's no way we can prevent him from becoming the hall master!"

"Senior Lu is right. I have indeed invited the founder here today!" Bai Ting chuckled.

"You have invited... the founder here?"

"Junior Bai, the founder passed away several dozen millenniums ago, so how could you possibly invite her here?"

"This isn't a joking matter, Junior Bai."

...

Everyone was startled for a moment before shaking their heads.

If the latter had said that he had found another artifact of the founder, they might still have been able to believe it. However, to have found the founder herself... Wasn't that the same as daydreaming?

"I have indeed found the founder. She's only a fragmented soul at the moment, and she's currently possessing the body of this young lady." Bai Ting pointed to the person behind him.

It was only at this moment that everyone noticed that Bai Ting had wrapped his zhenqi around a young lady. He gently placed her down before unwrapping his zhenqi, and in an instant, poison aura immediately burst out of Wei Ruyan's body, causing everyone to involuntarily take a step back.

Before anyone could comprehend what was going on, the elder seated in the center, Lin Jianghai, suddenly exclaimed in disbelief.

"This is... the Innate Poison Body?"

The Innate Poison Body was the unparalleled unique constitution of their Poison Hall. Ever since the passing of their founder, the Poison Hall had not been able to find a single individual who possessed such a constitution. Who would have thought that one would suddenly appear before them at this moment?

"She doesn't just possess the Innate Poison Body; she has the Poison Soul Constitution as well!" Bai Ting said.

"This..." Lin Jianghai's body trembled in agitation. "What is going on? Why is this young lady unconscious?"

"It's like this..." Bai Ting began to explain how he had met the 'founder' at a Poison Hall branch and promised the latter that he would bring the young lady to the headquarters.

"You are saying that... the soul of our founder has possessed the body of this young lady? It's only because of her inability to withstand the pressure from the Poison Soul Constitution in her weakened state that she has fell into a coma?" Lin Jianghai's body stiffened from shock.

"Indeed. If you don't believe me, you can take a look at this pill that we were given!"

Flicking his wrist, Bai Ting took a jade bottle out from his storage ring.

With a smile, he took out a pill that the 'founder' had given him, and he presented it to his teacher.

Chapter 1093

Spare Me, Founder (1)

He had consumed the pill multiple times on the journey to the headquarters, so by now, there was only a single pill left in the jade bottle.

Upon taking a closer look at the pill, Lin Jianghai frowned. "Isn't this... a pill used for reinforcing one's core?"

As a poison master, he was very familiar with all kinds of medicinal properties. With just a glance, he could tell that the pill before him was an ordinary pill that was used for reinforcing one's core. Other than that, there was nothing special about it.

"That was what I thought at the start too, but after it was reforged in the founder's hand, it transformed into an all-cure antidote!" Bai Ting said.

Lin Jianghai frowned.

His title as the Myriad Poison Eminence had originated from the huge variety of powerful poisons he had up his sleeves.

For an ordinary pill for reinforcing one's core to be able to cure all poisons... was that not as good as saying that little pill was his nemesis?

Extending his Spiritual Perception to the pill before him, he could see what was within the pill in an instant. The more he looked at it, the more perplexed he felt.

Based on his eye of discernment and deep understanding of medicinal herbs, there was definitely nothing different about the pill before his eyes. It was no different than the products that were commonly sold in the market. Putting him aside, even if a Saint 5-dan cultivator were to eat three jin 1 of such a pill, it would not have any effect at all. To call such a pill an all-cure antidote, wasn't that exaggerating its effects a little?

For him, a 9-star poison master, one of the greatest poison users in the world, to be unable to see through what was special with the pill... Had it not been for how confidently Bai Ting had spoken, he would have surely had the latter thrown into the

ditch that very instant.

"Are you certain that it has the effect of curing any poison?" Lin Jianghai asked doubtfully.

"If Teacher doubts my word, I can prove it to you right now..." Bai Ting smiled confidently. Turning around, he asked, "Senior Yuan Ling, may I know if you have any of your Cloudsmoke Powder with you at the moment?"

"I do." Yuan Ling nodded as he passed a jade bottle over.

As the most powerful poison he had ever concocted, it went without saying that he would bring it no matter where he went in case he found himself in an emergency situation.

"Poison Master Hai, I will need to trouble you on something..." Grabbing the jade bottle, Bai Ting beckoned Hai Mingjin over.

"Poison Master Bai, you need not stand on ceremony with me. If you have anything to ask of me, feel free to speak!" Hai Mingjin walked over.

"Actually, it's nothing much. I would just like to trouble you to consume this bottle of Cloudsmoke Powder..." Flicking his wrist, Bai Ting passed the jade bottle over.

"Ah?" Hai Mingjin's lips twitched wildly.

He had been wondering what Poison Master Bai was up to, but to think that the other party wanted to use him as a Pill Sample Beast for the poison!

The best way to determine the effectiveness of an antidote was not to examine its constituents but to try it out oneself. That was the most direct and efficient method.

But...

Shouldn't it suffice for you to test it on a Pill Sample Beast or something? Why do you need me to do it?

Without hesitating for long, Hai Mingjin walked over with gritted teeth. "Alright then."

While he was a little reluctant to serve as a test subject, when he recalled how mystical

the pill that the founder had produced was, he still confidently propped open the lid of the jade bottle and gulped down the Cloudsmoke Powder contained within.

Pu!

Right after consuming the poison, his face turned pitch-black, and blood spewed wildly from his mouth.

The crowd frowned upon witnessing that.

With their knowledge as 8-star poison masters, they could easily tell it wasn't an act staged between the both of them. That fellow was truly poisoned.

"Here!" Knowing that the Cloudsmoke Powder acted quickly, Bai Ting dared not dawdle. He hurriedly fed Hai Mingjin the antidote in his hand.

Hai Mingjin hurriedly swallowed it.

Hu!

Shortly after consuming the pill, Hai Mingjin's pitch-black complexion began to revert back to normal. However, perhaps due to him consuming too much of the Cloudsmoke Powder, the antidote wasn't sufficient to cure the poison altogether. Half of his face managed to revert back to white, but the other half still remained completely black, creating a peculiar sight.

Nevertheless, the antidote still did help to suppress the poison and stabilize Hai Mingjin's condition for the time being. With an awkward look on his face, he said, "Cough cough! Poison Master Bai, do you still have any more antidote? I think I might have eaten too much of the Cloudsmoke Powder, and a single pill isn't sufficient to cure it..."

Due to the limited size of the pills, the amount of Heaven's Path zhenqi they could harness was also limited. Even though they could neutralize any poison, the grade of the Cloudsmoke Powder was simply too high. A single pill was not sufficient to neutralize it entirely, thus resulting in the current situation.

Bai Ting's lips twitched. "That was the last pill..."

"Ah? I also completed my bottle on the journey to the Poison Hall..." Hai Mingjin's body

shuddered, and he nearly burst into tears.

It was supposed to just be a simple experiment to showcase the effectiveness of the pill to the others, but he ended up landing himself in such a state. Was there anyone more pitiful than he was?

Just what in the world did he do to deserve this?

"This..." Bai Ting's eyebrows twitched uncontrollably.

He was intending to display the prowess of the founder's all-cure antidote to the crowd, but... who would have thought that he would not have sufficient pills for it!

"Alright, there's no need to experiment anymore. That's indeed an all-cure antidote!" While the duo was feeling vexed by the situation they were in, Lin Jianghai raised his hand and spoke. "Yuan Ling, neutralize that young man's poison!"

"Yes!" Yuan Ling walked up to Hai Mingjin and stroked his hand softly down the latter's back.

In an instant, Hai Mingjin noticed a feeling of comfort rushing through his body, and the remaining blackness on his face also vanished without a trace.

"To be able to convert a pill meant for reinforcing one's core into an all-cure antidote that is capable of neutralizing even the Cloudsmoke Powder... This is indeed an inconceivable feat..." Ignoring Hai Mingjin, Lin Jianghai stood up and walked up to Wei Ruyan with a look of disbelief.

If he still harbored some reservations a moment ago, he was completely certain at this moment.

Putting aside the young lady's Innate Poison Body and Poison Soul Constitution, he had examined the antidote earlier carefully with his Spiritual Perception, and he had been certain that there was nothing special with it. Yet, it was actually capable of neutralizing poisons, even those at the level of the Cloudsmoke Powder. This was truly a little frightening.

He had taken a look at Yuan Ling's Cloudsmoke Powder before, and it was a poison that was so potent that it could easily claim the life of even a Saint 8-dan expert. To allow a mere core reinforcing pill to be able to cure the poison of the Cloudsmoke Pill

without any problem, that was indeed an incredible technique.

He found that even he was unable to comprehend the logic behind it.

Probably, only the founder possessed such incredible means.

"Teacher, you believe me?" Bai Ting's eyes lit up.

"Un. Other than the founder, I can't think of anyone else who could possess such incredible skills..." Lin Jianghai nodded with a smile. "Alright, let's go and attend the inauguration ceremony. Since Shen Jue wants me to die, let's see who will get the final laugh!" A sharp glint flashed through Lin Jianghai's narrowed eyes.

As a person who had managed to survive in the Poison Hall and climb to the very peak, Lin Jianghai naturally was not a 'good' person either.

"We'll listen to your command!" Seeing that their teacher had regained his confidence, the morale within the room lifted as they walked out with clenched fists.

The inauguration ceremony would be held in a square not too far away from the residence. Practically the entire populace of the Poison Hall headquarters had come over to spectate the event, such that it was impossible to see the end of the crowd with a single glance.

Placed on the pedestal at the very center of the square was a floating book that shimmered with a faint radiance. Beneath it stood a black-robed poison master who emanated an astounding aura.

Seeing the newly-arrived group, the black-robed poison master smiled. "Eminence Lin, you are finally here!"

His voice boomed resoundingly across the entire square. "I see that you have chosen to conduct the Life Tribute ritual to open the Tome of Poison Legacy. Good! Don't worry, your sacrifice won't be in vain. I'll spread the content within the tome to the entire Poison Hall and lead it to greater heights!"

"Eminence Lin, as one of the Four Eminences, you have enjoyed the stipends of the Poison Hall for many years. It's time for you to do your part for the Poison Hall!"

"Think about it, your sacrifice will become the blessing of the entire Poison Hall,

allowing us to achieve greater heights. This is something to rejoice over! Rest assured, your name shall be echoed for all of the later generations to hear!"

On the stage, another two men shouted along with Shen Jue.

They were both from the Four Eminences as well, figures of equal standing to Lin Jianghai.

Ignoring their words, Lin Jianghai leaped onto the stage as he sneered coldly. "Guardian Shen, Eminence Wang, and Eminence He, I came here not to conduct the Life Tribute ritual but to discuss the nomination of our new hall master!"

"Discuss the nomination of our new hall master? Eminence Lin, has age clouded your mind? Guardian Shen has obtained the Tome of Poison Legacy, an artifact of the founder, so it's only right for him to inherit the position of the poison master. Do you think that you can find another Tome of Poison Legacy in the world?" Eminence Wang sneered back.

"The Tome of Poison Legacy is one of the most important artifacts to our Poison Hall. Since Guardian Shen has managed to retrieve it for us, it's only natural that he assumes the highest position as well. Are you trying to disregard Guardian Shen's contribution, or are you trying to disregard the founder?" Eminence He harrumphed.

These two had long since decided to stand on the same side as Guardian Shen, so their words were filled with disdain and ridicule for Lin Jianghai.

"You need not play such meaningless word games with me. Since I dared to propose the discussion of the nomination of the new hall master, naturally, I have made my preparations beforehand." Lin Jianghai flicked his wrist grandly before declaring, "I have not found the Tome of Poison Legacy, but... I have found the founder!"

Upon saying those words, Lin Jianghai tilted his head toward the sky and bellowed, "Invite the founder in!"

Huala!

Yuan Ling, Bai Ting, and the others carefully carried Wei Ruyan over and placed her lightly down on the pedestal.

"Founder?"

"What does that mean?"

A commotion broke out amid the crowd. All of the poison masters glanced at one another in confusion, unsure of what was going on.

"Founder?"

Shen Jue and the other two Eminences also frowned upon hearing those words.

"Indeed. This young lady over here is the founder of our Poison Hall!" Lin Jianghai waved his hand grandly as he pointed toward Wei Ruyan. "Her soul has survived through the ages before claiming the body of this young lady over here, who possesses the Innate Poison Body. It's only a matter of time before she wakes up, and under her leadership, our Poison Hall will be brought to unprecedented glory!"

"She's the founder?"

"You must be joking! The founder passed away several dozen millenniums ago, so how could she possibly be a lady as young as that?"

Everyone was taken aback at first before a huge commotion broke out among them.

At this point, Shen Jue also could not help but sneer coldly, "Eminence Lin, it seems your reluctance to contribute to the Poison Hall has eroded your rationality. You simply picked a person off the street and proclaim that she is the founder. Why don't you go a step further and claim that she's Kong shi then?"

"Indeed!"

Shouts of approval broke out among the crowd below as well.

The Myriad Poison Eminence had always been a rational and dependable figure, but why was he acting so rash this time around?

To claim that an unconscious young lady was the founder... He had to be joking!

"Audacious!" Lin Jianghai roared authoritatively. "Guardian Shen, as a 9-star poison master, how blind must you be to be unable to recognize the Innate Poison Body?"

"Innate Poison Body?"

"The young lady possesses the Innate Poison Body?"

An uproar exploded among the crowd. Shen Jue was also stunned for a moment before he hurriedly turned his gaze toward the young lady. Indeed, there was something amiss about the young lady, and a cold gleam flashed across his eyes.

"The Innate Poison Body is a unique constitution that has only appeared in the founder in the past several dozen millenniums. None of us standing here have ever seen it before. For you to simply bring a young lady into here and claim that she possesses the Innate Poison Body... I'm afraid that you will have to show us more evidence than that! Besides, even if she does possess such a unique constitution, how can you prove that she's related to the founder?"

Flinging his sleeves, Shen Jue sneered coldly. "In order to prevent me from becoming the hall master so that you can continue sitting on your high horse, don't you think that you're crafting too huge of a farce over here?"

"Crafting too huge of a farce?"

"That could very well be the case!"

"No one among us has really seen the Innate Poison Body as well, so it's impossible to verify it on the spot. Furthermore, for a person possessing the Innate Poison Body to suddenly emerge at this moment after all this time, how can there be such a huge coincidence in the world?"

...

As expected. Right after Shen Jue said those words, echoes of agreement sounded among the crowd.

They were already skeptical when Lin Jianghai said that the young lady was the founder, and Shen Jue's words served to further deepen their doubts.

Chapter 1094

Spare Me, Founder (2)

While the constitution of the young lady on the stage did resemble the Innate Poison Body, no one present there had actually seen the true Innate Poison Body in person, so it was difficult for them to verify the matter on the spot.

Furthermore, for Lin Jianghai to proclaim that he had found the founder shortly after Shen Jue had found the Tome of Poison Legacy... No matter how one looked at it, it appeared that Lin Jianghai was making it up to willfully go against Shen Jue.

"The Innate Poison Body is also known as the Constitution of Disaster. Once unrestrained, the individual will begin releasing lethal poison from her body uncontrollably. I believe that all of you should have been well aware of this matter even before I spoke. Even though this young lady is unconscious, she has been passively releasing lethal poison from her body and soul. If Guardian Shen does not trust me, you can try to gather the poison aura together and see if you are able to withstand it or not! If even a 9-star poison master like you is unable to withstand it, that should be enough to prove whether she truly possesses the Innate Poison Body or not!" Lin Jianghai chuckled.

There were not any more of the all-cure antidotes to prove that the young lady was the founder, but the poison aura that she emanated was the best proof in itself.

While it might not cause much damage in the short-term, it would be lethal even to a 9-star poison master if he were to take in too much of it.

Not even 9-star poison masters could fake such an ability.

"This..." Shen Jue was taken aback.

With his eye of discernment, he was definitely more than capable of seeing whether the young lady before him possessed the Innate Poison Body or not. However, it was just moments before his inauguration, and he was just a single step away from becoming the hall master. If he were to acknowledge that the young lady before him was indeed the founder, this opportunity would slip right through his fingers.

And this was not a conclusion that he was willing to accept.

"Eminence Lin, do you take us for fools? Since you have prepared an Innate Poison Body, it's only a given that you see through the act and prepare a sufficiently lethal poison beforehand. Guardian Shen would only be falling into your trap if he really attempted to take in the poison aura. I will have to earnestly ask you not to bring such unseemly schemes into this solemn ceremony!" Eminence Wang shouted.

"Indeed. Others might not know much about you, but as fellow Eminences, I know you quite well. If you are reluctant to die, just say so. It's really laughable how you can come up with such nonsense when it's time for you to play your part. The Poison Hall has truly misjudged you..." Eminence He sneered coldly.

"There's no need for you to change the subject over here and attempt to sway public opinion against me. If it's that easy to feign the Innate Poison Body, our Poison Hall also wouldn't have been in tatters for so many years!" Lin Jianghai waved his hand. "Whether this young lady is truly the founder or not, we can easily invite the wills of the predecessors and have them judge for us!"

Just like the Master Teacher Pavilion, the Poison Hall also retained the wills of their predecessors. If there was any matter that the Poison Hall had trouble confirming, they could invite the predecessors over to make a judgement for them.

The wills of the predecessors would not lie, and they would not be swayed by their sentiments either. This would allow them to make a fair judgement.

"There's no need to bother the predecessors over something as minor as this. All we want to know is whether she possesses the Innate Poison Body or not, right? That's simple. I will just have to check that no one has planted poison on her, and if the poison aura she is emanating truly comes from her body and soul, we will be able to confirm that she does possess the Innate Poison Body," Shen Jue said with a frown.

He had already confirmed that the young lady before him did possess the Innate Poison Body, and that convinced him that he could not allow Lin Jianghai to invite the predecessors to judge the matter. Once it was publicly affirmed by the predecessors that the young lady did indeed possess the Innate Poison Body, there would be no way he could become the hall master anymore. The trouble he had gone through to obtain the Tome of Poison Legacy would have been in vain.

As formidable as he was, there was still no way he could match up to an individual who possessed the Innate Poison Body. It was clear whom the poison masters would eventually side with.

Hong long!

Right after saying those words, Shen Jue raised his hand and grasped at Wei Ruyan.

Hula!

Propped up by his zhenqi, the young lady floated silently in midair. Her eyes were tightly shut, reminiscent of a sleeping beauty.

"Let me take a look..."

While slowly making his way toward Wei Ruyan, a hint of killing intent flashed across Shen Jue's eyes as he slipped a sliver of his will from his Primordial Spirit discreetly into the young lady's body.

He was going to kill the young lady under the pretext of checking on her.

Once the young lady was dead, there would be nothing that Lin Jianghai could use against him anymore. What founder or Innate Poison Body, none of that was useful to a dead person!

After the deed was done, he could push everything onto Lin Jianghai. He could claim that in his attempts to feign the Innate Poison Body, he used excessively lethal poison and ended up killing the young lady.

In any case, the young lady had been in an unconscious state right from the start, so no one would be able to tell for sure when the young lady truly died anyway.

His movements were extremely discreet. Lin Jianghai had not thought that the great Right Guardian of the Poison Hall would actually be so despicable as to attempt to claim the life of the founder before everyone's eyes, so he was also oblivious to Shen Jue's movements too.

Hu!

As soon as the sliver of will entered the young lady's body, it immediately dived

straight for her consciousness.

As a 9-star poison master, his strength had already reached an unfathomable level. Even though it was only a sliver of his will, it was so powerful that even Saint 6-dan experts would not be able to withstand it.

Huala!

Upon reaching the depths of her consciousness, he saw a young lady floating quietly in midair. Her eyes were tightly shut, but a faint poisonous aura could be seen constantly emanating from her.

As expected, she does possess the Poison Soul Constitution as well! Shen Jue's complexion turned even more awful.

It was already sufficiently difficult to find an individual who possessed the Innate Poison Body, but to think that she would have the Poison Soul Constitution as well! If this young lady were to survive, even if he managed to become the hall master today, it would not be long before he would be forced to abdicate for her inauguration!

Individuals who possessed both of the constitutions were simply too fearsome. If they were to study the Way of Poison, their fighting prowess would surely surge through the ranks. It wouldn't take long for even a 9-star poison master like him to be outdone!

I have prepared for several centuries for this position. No matter who you are, I won't let you get in my way...

With a cold glint in his eyes, Shen Jue roared frenziedly. He warped his hand into a deadly sword and slashed it toward the unconscious young lady.

The sword possessed such overwhelming force that it would kill the young lady even if she was conscious, let alone while she was in a dormant state.

Tzzla!

Just as the sword was about to cut through the young lady, a powerful aura abruptly burst forth from Wei Ruyan's consciousness. Following which, an immense might gushed out and stopped the sword in its path.

What? Shen Jue narrowed his eyes in alarm.

In the next moment, a figure appeared before his eyes.

He was a will as well. He was not a Primordial Spirit, but he carried the inviolable authority of one who had been acknowledged by the heavens. Shen Jue could not help but feel an incredible pressure weighing down on him.

"Celestial Master Teacher? You are... Kong shi?" Shen Jue's face paled in fright.

He had not thought that he would encounter another will in the consciousness of the young lady, much less a Celestial Master Teacher!

In all of history, there had only been a single known Celestial Master Teacher, and he was none other than the World's Teacher. Could the man before him truly be that legendary figure?

"Trying to lay your hands on my student? I'll have you pay for this with your life!" The figure narrowed his eyes before raising his palm.

Tzzzzzz!

Several surges of zhenqi immediately gushed into the young lady's consciousness. Unlike ordinary zhenqi, these surges of zhenqi seemed to command the very might of the world itself, as if the heavens themselves were passing judgement upon an evildoer.

"No, that isn't..." Horrified, Shen Jue tried to explain himself, but it was already too late.

Like hot oil encountering the sparks, his will immediately burst into flames. Before he could even cry in agony, his will had been reduced to ashes.

Pu!

With the elimination of his will, the real Shen Jue, who was in the midst of checking Wei Ruyan's condition outside, reeled in shock, and blood spewed from his mouth.

That will had originated from his Primordial Spirit, and its destruction had been so abrupt that his main body ended up suffering light injuries as well.

"Guardian Shen..." Not expecting the 'new hall master' whom they had embraced to abruptly spurt blood while checking on the condition of a young lady, Eminence Wang

and Eminence He hurriedly rushed forward to check on his condition out of worry. However, what they met with instead was a pair of eyes filled with fear and horror, as if they had encountered a monster.

"Quick, we need to go now..." With a pale face, Shen Jue quickly turned around to leave. However, before he could even take the first step away, he suddenly felt an indomitable aura rising from the young lady behind him. The aura was, in every sense of the word, overwhelming. It felt as if the world was collapsing around him, and no matter where he ran or hid, he would never be able to get away.

Hong long long!

The young lady slowly rose into the air, and despite the lack of any wind, her pitch-black hair was fluttering. Her tightly-shut eyes paired with the poisonous aura that was flowing ceaselessly from her body created a truly sinister sight.

"Do you think that you will be able to escape after attempting to crush my soul with your Primordial Spirit?" A cold, androgynous voice that induced panic and despair in the hearts of the listeners sounded from the depths of the young lady's body.

"Crush her soul?"

"Guardian Shen attempted to kill the young lady?"

Everyone was stunned for a moment before directing furious gazes toward Shen Jue.

They had thought that he was truly intending to check if the young lady possessed the Innate Poison Body, but who would have thought that his true intention was to eliminate her!

"Shen Jue, you..." Lin Jianghai was so furious that he almost erupted on the spot. Cold sweat drenched his entire body.

To think that he was completely oblivious to it when Shen Jue attempted something right before his eyes... If something had really happened to the founder, how could he ever have faced the predecessors?

"I..." Shen Jue's face paled. Turning to look at the young lady, he forcefully suppressed his fear and replied, "I am just testing you. It was not my intention to kill you."

"Testing me? Humph! I was the one who singlehandedly created the Poison Hall many years ago, do you think that a brat like you is qualified to test me? Who do you think you are?"

The young lady's eyes were still shut, but her body was slowly drifting down from the air. Every single inch she moved downward, the pressure that Shen Jue felt increased twofold. It did not take long for Shen Jue to be completely drenched in sweat, and he felt like he was swiftly approaching his limit.

He was a 9-star poison master, and his strength had already reached a frightening level. Yet, he found himself completely powerless before the other party, as if he was a mere puppet!

"I..." Under the immense pressure, Shen Jue found himself incapable of uttering a single word.

Considering how the other party was able to wipe away his will in just an instant, it was apparent that the other party's strength far surpassed his!

More importantly, he was convinced that the person before him was Kong shi, and this realization sapped his entire body of its strength.

"Back when I dominated the continent, there was not a person who dared challenge me. As a junior who has inherited my legacy, how dare you raise your hand against me? Has your arrogance made you forget your own position?" The young lady's voice erupted once more. Every single word of hers seemed like thunder within the ears, leaving one not daring to respond.

"Elder, I really didn't intend to make a move against you. I just wanted to see who you are," Shen Jue replied anxiously.

"Do you know who I am now?" the young lady sneered coldly.

Before Shen Jue could respond, Eminence Wang stood forward and bellowed furiously, "Who in the world are you? Where did you get the guts to cause trouble in the inauguration ceremony of our new hall master?"

He had not experienced what Shen Jue had undergone within Wei Ruyan's body, so he was unaware of what kind of terrifying monster he was standing before. Even though the young lady was emanating a powerful aura, he had made a mental gauge and

determined that he would be able to defeat her with his strength. This was also why he dared to step forward and question her.

"Who am I?"

A chilling laughter burst from the mouth of the young lady.

Huala!

A book appeared from the glabella of the young lady, and in the blink of an eye, it grew to several hundred meters wide. The book emanated the divine aura of the heavens, sealing the movements of those within the area.

Peng!

Everything happened in a flash. Before the Eminence Wang could even comprehend what was going on, he had already been reduced to a lump of meat.

After crushing Eminence Wang, the young lady placed her hands behind her back as she stood loftily in the air, reminiscent of a demon or a deity.

"Do you know who I am now?"

Witnessing the horrific sight before them, Shen Jue and Eminence He quickly kneeled to the ground.

"Founder, spare me..."

Chapter 1095

Spirit Awakener

Eminence Wang was a 9-star poison master just like them. Putting aside his proficiency in poison, his cultivation itself had already reached an unfathomable level. To be crushed in a single strike such that even his Primordial Spirit had no chance to escape at all... it would probably be very easy for the young lady to do the same to them as well.

The Innate Poison Body, the Poison Soul Constitution, and strength beyond measure... Without a doubt, the young lady before them had to be the founder!

Not only were Shen Jue and Eminence He frightened into kneeling down, all of the poison masters who had gathered around the area hurriedly got onto their knees, not daring to show the slightest disrespect to the young lady before them.

The young lady harrumphed coldly. "I don't wish to see anyone doubt me anymore. If anyone is harboring any thought of turning against me, know that you will share the same fate as Eminence Wang!"

She then turned to Shen Jue and Eminence He, and with an impassive look, she uttered coldly, "Offer your souls to me, and I can spare your lives."

"Yes!"

At this point, could Shen Jue and Eminence He afford to hesitate in the slightest? They hurriedly offered their souls to the young lady.

Given how the other party could slay Eminence Wang as easily as snapping the neck of a chicken, she would not require too much more effort to get rid of them!

Gaining possession of Shen Jue and Eminence He's souls meant that she now held absolute control over their life and death. As such, she no longer had to fear the duo turning against her.

After that was settled, she turned to Lin Jianghai and sent him a telepathic message.

"Gather all of the 9-star poison masters in the Poison Hall here to awaken my constitution. I want to recover to my peak as soon as possible."

"Yes!" Lin Jianghai had already heard of the story from his student, Bai Ting, earlier, so he was not too surprised by the happenings.

Hu!

After hearing Lin Jianghai's response, the young lady fell back to the ground with her eyes still tightly shut, seemingly falling back into her unconscious state.

However, after that incident, there was no one who dared to look down on the young lady anymore. All of the gazes directed toward her were filled with fear and deference.

Lin Jianghai quickly gathered all of the 9-star poison masters that were currently in the headquarters, and with their combined strength, they managed to suppress and fully awaken Wei Ruyan's Innate Poison Body.

...

Three days later...

Wei Ruyan had finally awakened. Sitting on the highest throne that belonged to the hall master of the entire Poison Hall, she looked into the distance with her fists tightly clenched.

She might have been unconscious, but she could vaguely feel what her teacher had done for her.

Not only did her teacher risk his life to infiltrate the Poison Hall in seek of a cure for her, he had even severed a portion of his soul and slipped it into her consciousness so as to protect her from whatever danger she might have faced on her journey.

This was a deed so great that she truly had no idea how she could repay him.

Recalling her teacher's kind smile and elegant disposition, Wei Ruyan's eyes reddened, and she secretly made a vow in her heart. Teacher, Ruyan will not let down your expectations.

Her mother had died shortly after her birth, and her father had eventually left her as

well. For as long as she could remember, pain and suffering had been an integral part of her life. No matter how she struggled and ran, she could never escape from it. Who knew how many times she had lamented the callousness of the heavens? But just as she thought that she was at the end of her road, the world brought her teacher to her.

For her, he had calculated every single possibility so as to ensure that no harm would come to her. For her, he was willing to brave through danger so as to buy her a sliver of hope. For her, he had stood unwaveringly before 9-star poison masters to protect her.

With such a teacher, what else could she possibly hope for?

...

I never thought that the soul fragment that I left with Wei Ruyan would end up being forced into action as well. The Poison Hall headquarters is far more dangerous than I imagined.

Just as the flying ship was descending upon Qingyuan City, Zhang Xuan felt the will that he had left with Wei Ruyan dissipating from overexertion, and he sighed deeply.

Unlike the Master Teacher Pavilion, chaos and lawlessness was the norm for the Poison Hall. It was a place where only those who possessed absolute strength could win the acknowledgement of others. Fearing for Wei Ruyan's safety, he had decided to deposit a fragment of his soul and a golden page with Wei Ruyan in case she landed herself in a dangerous position.

From the looks of it, it was fortunate that he had prepared thoroughly. Otherwise, that student of his might have lost her life.

Currently, he was a little too far away to perceive what had happened in the Poison Hall headquarters, but considering that the golden page had been used, Wei Ruyan should be safe for the time being.

Putting aside 9-star poison masters, even 9-star master teachers would be helpless before the golden page. It should not be too difficult to instill deference into the hearts of the poison masters once it was used.

"Principal Zhang, Combat Master Feng and Combat Master Jiang are here."

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, Ruohuan gongzi walked over and reported. Raising his gaze, he saw that Feng Xun and Jiang Yuan were indeed in the midst of flying over to the ship.

Zhang Xuan walked forward to greet them.

In the past month of absence, Feng Xun had managed to achieve a breakthrough to the Primordial Spirit realm as well. His strength had grown significantly greater and steadier from before. It was apparent that he had been working hard over the past month.

As for Jiang Yuan, he had successfully reinforced his Primordial Spirit realm primary stage cultivation, and his mind had grown considerably more resilient as well. It seemed like being possessed by the Skyleaf King had made him realize that his greatest weakness lay in his mind, so he had decided to focus his efforts on that aspect.

"Principal Zhang, you are finally here!" Feng Xun said with a smile.

Considering the enormous size of their ship and the comparatively lower cultivation of the aerial saint beasts pulling the ship along, it was natural that Zhang Xuan's group would take longer to arrive at Qingyuan City.

However, this had worked in their favor as well. So far, those from the Combat Master Hall had already learned about the happenings in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, so they had all prepared beforehand. So as to uphold their honor, the combat masters were far more motivated and driven than ever, and morale among them was at an all-time high.

Within just the span of a single month, the overall fighting prowess of the Combat Master Hall had risen significantly; even the head of the Combat Master Hall was delighted to see it.

"The Combat Master Hall has prepared accommodation for you and your students. Come, let me bring you over!" Jiang Yuan said.

"Alright!"

Controlling the saint beasts, the flying ship ascended once more, and not too long later, under Jiang Yuan and Feng Xun's lead, they arrived at a massive manor. It was extremely vast, spanning over an area of a hundred qing 1. Even though Zhang Xuan

had brought a large number of students along with him, the size of the manor was still sufficient to house all of them comfortably.

After settling the group into the manor, Feng Xun walked to Zhang Xuan and said, "Principal Zhang, the exchange will be held three days from now. Our Combat Master Hall will hold a grand welcoming ceremony to receive you then!"

"I'll be troubling Combat Master Feng then." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Considering how his students had just made the long journey from Hongyuan City to Qingyuan City, it was natural that they were feeling mentally fatigued at the moment. In order to be in their peak state for the exchange, it would be best for them to have a few days of rest. The date of the exchange had probably been arranged in consideration of that.

After confirming the date that the exchange would be held, Feng Xun and Jiang Yuan took their leave. Shortly after that, Zhang Xuan beckoned for School Head Mo to come over.

"Have the students condition their state and cultivate diligently in preparation for the exchange three days from now. I have some matters that I have to attend to, so I'll be heading out for the time being."

The purpose for holding an exchange with the Combat Master Hall was to broaden the students' horizon, so it did not matter whether they won or lost.

After all, it was impossible for everything to go smoothly in cultivation. Besides, occasional losses weren't too bad either. It would help to build their mental resilience and aid them in maturing as a person.

Putting everything aside, even Zhang Xuan had suffered constant losses to his clone as well. Yet, despite losing time and time again, he had never lost his confidence and drive. Instead, he saw his clone as a goal that he should strive for, and that only served to fuel his motivation.

Upon hearing that Zhang Xuan was heading out, School Head Mo nodded slightly. A moment later, he suddenly realized something, and he turned a worried gaze toward Zhang Xuan. "Principal Zhang, we are currently in the capital of Qingyuan Conferred Empire, and there are many experts here. When you are outside, you must make sure to not act recklessly. Otherwise, even we will be unable to help you when you get into

trouble."

Their principal was an incredible person. On top of possessing unparalleled talent, he was righteous as well. However, he had just one single flaw—recklessness.

Back in Hongyuan Empire, they could still cover up for him given the prestigious standing of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. However, in Qingyuan City, there were many individuals whose standing was above theirs, so it was still best for them to proceed carefully. They were only there for an exchange, so it would be best if they did not cause trouble beyond their means.

Seeing the worried look on School Head Mo's face, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. "Rest assured, I am only heading out to find a way to treat the Golden Origin Cauldron. I won't cause any unnecessary trouble!"

He had always conducted himself prudently, so why did School Head Mo have such a poor impression of him? It was as if the other party regarded him as a troublemaker.

"That's good..." School Head Mo heaved a sigh of relief.

Honestly speaking, he was a little skeptical about what Zhang Xuan had said. However, the latter was still the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, his direct superior. As an elder of the academy, it was within his rights to offer words of advice to the principal, but if he went too far, it could be considered insubordination.

After leaving the manor, Zhang Xuan asked around for the direction to the Blacksmith Guild before heading over.

The Golden Origin Cauldron had fallen into a coma after saving the expedition team, and as its master, it was only right for him to find a way to save it.

Before Zhang Xuan reached the Blacksmith Guild, a rather peculiar looking building came into sight. The building was reminiscent of a tower, rising straight into the clouds. Its top was rather slender, and it arched slightly downward like the neck of a swan.

Reading the plaque that hung at the entrance, Zhang Xuan was intrigued.

Spirit Awakener Guild? What kind of occupation is a spirit awakener?

He knew quite a bit about the various occupations in the world, but he had never heard of spirit awakeners before.

Just as Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, an attendant suddenly walked up to him and said, "This young master over here, are there any artifacts that you need enchanted? At just a price of ten middle-tier spirit stones, I can introduce you to the best spirit awakener in our guild. I guarantee that it will definitely be well worth your money."

The attendant was a young man in his early teens. His cultivation was only at Transcendent Mortal 1-dan, but the brilliant gleam in his eyes seemed to hint that he was a particularly resourceful person.

Zhang Xuan casually took out ten middle-tier spirit stones and tossed them over to the attendant.

To the current him, middle-tier spirit stones were not worth much. He would not feel guilty no matter how many of them he splurged. Since the attendant seemed to know quite a lot regarding spirit awakeners, it would be a good opportunity to learn more about the occupation.

"Is spirit awakener... a unique occupation?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before asking.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's question, the attendant replied with a question of his own. "Young Master, you aren't a local, right?"

"I came from Hongyuan Empire," Zhang Xuan answered with a nod.

The attendant chuckled. "That explains it. It's not uncommon for those who came via Qingyuan Empire to have never heard of spirit awakeners before."

"In the strictest sense, spirit awakener cannot be considered as a unique occupation, but without a doubt, it's one of the most lucrative occupations in Qingyuan Empire. There are countless cultivators who have come in seek of their services, and even those from the Master Teacher Pavilion visit often!"

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan asked, "What can spirit awakeners do?"

Even if spirit awakener was not a unique occupation, considering how even master teachers sought their services, there was bound to be something extraordinary about

them. It was probably an occupation similar to herbologist; even though it might not have a distinct heritage required for it to be considered a unique occupation, their outstanding prowess in handling medicinal herbs was indeed something that mankind direly needed.

"As the name suggests, spirit awakeners have the ability to enchant spirits!" the attendant said. "For example, there are some cultivators who might find it hard to advance to Consonant Spirit realm due to having reinforced their cultivation too much. In such circumstances, if a spirit awakener assists in guiding the soul along, the cultivator will be able to achieve a breakthrough smoothly.

"Also, when weapons lose their spirit, spirit awakeners are also able to enchant a new spirit into it, thus breathing life into the weapon once more. On top of that, spirit awakeners are also able to guide souls into a unique state of mind that makes it easier for them to be refined and tempered. All in all, it is an occupation that is centered around support!"

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. "This... Do spirit awakeners have the ability to awaken a dormant spirit within an artifact as well?"

"Of course! Other occupations might be completely helpless before a dormant spirit, but spirit awakeners definitely wield such a capability," the attendant replied proudly. "Anything concerning souls and spirits come under the expertise of spirit awakeners! If that's what you are seeking, then I must say that you have come to the right place!"

"Very well, take me in," Zhang Xuan said with a nod.

His purpose of heading to the Blacksmith Guild was to awaken the Golden Origin Cauldron's spirit, but seeing that the spirit awakeners happened to specialize in this field, he decided to pay their guild a visit first.

While leading the way forward, the attendant asked, "Young Master, do you have an artifact whose spirit has become dormant?"

The spirits contained within artifacts were not too different from souls. They could be severely damaged in the midst of battle, and they would also gradually erode with time as well. Many powerful artifacts had met their downfall in such a manner.

While reforging an artifact would grant it a new spirit, such a process could be highly damaging to the artifact, resulting in a decline in its tier. This was where spirit

awakeners came in.

In addition, there were formidable spirits who were unwilling to submit to their masters. In such cases, a cultivator might also opt to have the spirits erased so as to have a more subservient spirit enchanted into it.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"May I know what tier your artifact is? Depending on the tier of your artifact, the rank of the spirit awakener you need will differ as well," the attendant said.

"Saint intermediate-tier!" Zhang Xuan replied.

Chapter 1096

Vice Guild Leader Xu

"Saint intermediate-tier?" The attendant leaped in shock.

Saint artifacts were extremely precious commodities within the Qingyuan Empire. Even Saint low-tier artifacts were extremely rare, let alone Saint intermediate-tier artifacts. The most powerful weapon currently wielded by the emperor of the Qingyuan Empire, the Infinite Sword, was also only at Saint intermediate-tier.

If a Saint intermediate-tier artifact appeared in an auction, it would definitely attract countless experts' attention.

Due to Zhang Xuan's young age, the attendant had thought that he would only have a Spirit pinnacle artifact in his possession at best. Yet, who would have thought that Zhang Xuan actually had an artifact of such caliber with him?

The attendant couldn't help but ask, "Young Master... are you a master teacher?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. Slightly intrigued by the attendant's question, he asked, "How did you know that?"

He was not wearing his master teacher robe at the moment, and there did not seem to be anything about him that would suggest that he was a master teacher either. How did the attendant know that he was a master teacher?

"If you weren't a master teacher, your Saint intermediate-tier artifact would have long been snatched from your hands," the attendant said with a bitter smile.

All Saint intermediate-tier artifacts could be considered top-notch treasures within the Qingyuan Empire. Any news about them would induce countless cultivators to gather together like ravenous piranhas, and they would do everything that they could so that the Saint intermediate-tier artifact would be theirs in the end. Considering how young Zhang Xuan was, it was hard to believe that he would be able to retain possession of his Saint intermediate-tier weapon by himself.

Unless... he was a master teacher!

Considering the vast power that the Master Teacher Pavilion wielded, there were very few who would have the guts to steal from a master teacher.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

He knew of this as well.

Had it not been for his standing as a master teacher, there would have surely been many who had attempted to obtain his cultivation technique, and he would have met with much trouble along the way. He would not have been able to progress this far so smoothly.

Being a master teacher was a heavy responsibility, but it was also a huge umbrella that protected one as well.

After confirming that the other party was a master teacher, the attendant decided not to dwell too much on the matter.

"A 7-star spirit awakener is needed to wake the spirit within a Saint intermediate-tier artifact. In our guild, there are only three people who have achieved this level, and they are our guild leader and the two vice guild leaders. I will help you to make arrangements now."

Zhang Xuan nodded. A moment later, he asked curiously, "You mentioned earlier that the guild leader and the two vice guild leaders are 7-star spirit awakeners. Is the ranking system for spirit awakeners the same as the other occupations?"

"That's right. However, the lowest rank for spirit awakeners is 4-star," the attendant replied.

"The lowest rank is 4-star?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed to hear those words.

"That's right. While other occupations range from 1-star to 9-star, spirit awakeners have to take the 4-star examination right after their apprentice stage," the attendant said. "This is just an arrangement to align our ranking system with the other occupations. Conventionally, spirit awakeners are divided by low-tier, middle-tier, and high-tier. Low-tier spirit awakeners range from 4-star to 5-star, middle-tier spirit awakeners range from 6-star to 7-star, and high-tier spirit awakeners range from 8-

star to 9-star. However, as this ranking system deviates from the convention adopted by the other occupations, it isn't preferable."

After a moment of thought, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization. "I see."

Since the occupation dealt with spirits and souls, the minimum requirement to becoming a spirit awakener would be to possess a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan Consonant Spirit realm. At such a level of cultivation, one could already be deemed to be at 4-star pinnacle or half 5-star in other occupations.

If the Spirit Awakener Guild ranked their members from 1-star, they would not be able to match their ranking system with those adopted by the other occupations. Thus, for convenience purposes, they decided to set their lowest rank as 4-star.

Ultimately, there were countless occupations in the world, and there were all kinds of unique or even bizarre rules for them as well.

For example, there was a unique occupation in the Master Teacher Continent known as a seer. They wielded the power to peer into the secrets of the heavens, allowing them to foretell fortunes and calamities. This mystical art required them to have a deep understanding of the world in order to interpret it, so the minimum requirement to become a seer was to possess a cultivation of Saint realm.

Naturally, their lowest rank would be even higher than that of spirit awakeners, starting off from 7-star.

The 7-star spirit awakener that the attendant spoke of was effectively referring to middle-tier spirit awakeners. Judging from the conventional ranking system, an individual of that rank would possess a cultivation of Saint 2-dan at the very minimum.

While maneuvering their way through the Spirit Awakener Guild, Zhang Xuan continued asking questions, and it did not take long before he gained some understanding of the circumstances of the guild.

The guild leader and vice guild leaders were Primordial Spirit realm cultivators, and they could be considered top-notch experts within Qingyuan City.

Following behind the attendant, Zhang Xuan entered a vast hall.

Taking a swift look, Zhang Xuan saw quite a few cultivators queuing neatly in a line,

waiting for a spirit awakener to help them temper their souls so that they could further raise their cultivation.

At the very front of the line, he saw a Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator walk up to the young man ahead of him and say, "I haven't been able to make a breakthrough into Consonant Spirit realm due to my inability to sense my soul, so I hope to receive your pointers for this matter."

The young man nodded as he gestured to the round platform in front of him. "Sit down!"

The Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator quickly took his seat on the middle of the round platform.

Shortly after the cultivator sat down, the young man placed his palm on the ground, and a surge of light began creeping its way toward the round platform, creating a circle of light around the cultivator.

"Relax your body," the young man said. His voice carried some kind of magic to it that compelled others to obey him.

The Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator could not help but shut his eyes, and gradually, he fell into a unique state of mind.

Witnessing this scene, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. He is... trying to stimulate the cultivator's soul? He is assisting the cultivator in sensing his soul so that the latter can achieve a breakthrough? Incredible!

His opinion of spirit awakeners, based on what he had heard from the attendant earlier, was that it was an occupation that specialized in means that stimulated the soul. However, it seemed like it was not as simple as he had thought.

The occupation seemed to be a little similar to soul oracles. While soul oracles possessed expertise in strengthening themselves through unique means, spirit awakeners used their abilities to support others.

Taking the Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator for example, he had been unable to sense his soul thus far, so he had not been able to reach Consonant Spirit realm yet. However, under the stimulation of the spirit awakener, his soul had grown stronger, making it easier for his body to tap into it. As such, it should not be long before he

achieved a breakthrough.

Hong long!

While Zhang Xuan was still deep in thought, the Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator suddenly howled in agitation, and his aura surged swiftly. In a single push, he managed to break the bottleneck that had limited him and reached the Consonant Spirit realm.

Seeing how the cultivator managed to achieve a breakthrough within just a few minutes, Zhang Xuan could not help but feel a little impressed. No wonder everyone seeks to head to higher tier empires, there are indeed more opportunities here.

In places like the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, the Consonant Spirit realm was a huge hurdle that most failed to overcome despite working their entire life. Over here, however, the very same bottleneck could be overcome that easily. Spirit awakener was indeed an extraordinary occupation.

However, while it was common knowledge that there were more opportunities in higher tier empires, not everyone could afford to move to such an empire.

Putting aside the dangers that lurked throughout the long journey from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance to Qingyuan City, the cost of living within higher tier empires was frightening as well. Just a single enchanting session could easily cost up to a high-tier spirit stone!

Not even the Alliance Head Residence of the Myriad Kingdom Alliance could afford to fork out such a sum.

On top of that, there were also multiple restrictions here and there. There was indeed a huge sum of money flowing around Qingyuan City every single day, but without reaching a certain level of proficiency in an occupation, one would never be able to lay their hands on the resources flowing through the area.

"Alright, we'll stop here today. I need some time to rest, and I will only return in ten days' time!"

As the Clarifying Turbidity realm cultivator achieved a breakthrough, the young man's face gradually turned ghastly pale, as if he had overexerted himself.

Fearing that the young master before him would be unaware of the matter, the

attendant explained, "Spirit enchantment is very taxing on the soul, so spirit awakeners can only serve three people in a single sitting, and they then have to rest for at least ten days afterwards!"

Zhang Xuan nodded.

As a soul oracle who commanded a deep understanding of souls, he could see through the difficulties that lay in spirit enchantment. Ten days was indeed the minimum time required for them to recover from their exertion.

Proceeding ahead, Zhang Xuan saw a few others spirit awakeners; some were helping to temper the souls of cultivators while others were busy enchanting weapons. In order to ensure that they could be served before the spirit awakener exhausted themselves, there were even some who paid a hefty sum to purchase the queue positions of those ahead of them.

After taking a swift look around, Zhang Xuan could not help but remark, "It's indeed a lucrative occupation."

The cultivation of a soul was much different from the cultivation of a physical body and zhenqi. The latter two were at least tangible, making it easier for cultivators to grasp them, but the same could not be said for souls. As a result, it was not uncommon for cultivators to face trouble cultivating their souls, and this was where spirit awakeners came in. They could hasten the growth of one's soul, thus saving the cultivator much time and fumbling around.

At the same time, taming the spirit within a weapon was also a troublesome process. Depending on the spirit one was dealing with, there were those who had not succeeded even after many years of effort. Since that was the case, it was sometimes a more viable option for the cultivator to eliminate the spirit and have a spirit awakener enchant a more obedient one in.

These two abilities were more than sufficient to lay the foundations for the explosive popularity of the occupation.

Circling through the crowd, they finally arrived at the doorstep of a vast room. "Just ahead of us is the area where Vice Guild Leader Xu works. I have to give you a heads up first; the prices for Vice Guild Leader Xu's spirit enchantment tend to be steeper, especially when it's a Saint intermediate-tier artifact we are talking about here."

"How much will it cost?" Zhang Xuan had known that it would not be cheap from the start, so he dove right into the topic at hand.

"100 high-tier spirit stones!" the attendant replied.

"It's still alright. That isn't too expensive." Zhang Xuan nodded.

As long as he could save the Golden Origin Cauldron, even ten thousand high-tier spirit stones would not be an expense too high for him to incur, let alone a hundred.

Huala!

With a flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a hundred high-tier spirit stones.

Upon seeing the sum, the attendant hurriedly nodded in agitation before saying, "Give me a moment to report the matter to Vice Guild Leader Xu."

After which, he entered the room, and it did not take long for him to return with a relieved look on his face. "Young Master, it seems like your luck is not bad today. Vice Guild Leader Xu happens to have one more slot left. Allow me to bring you in!"

Following behind the attendant, Zhang Xuan walked into the room.

The room was roughly a hundred square meters large, and there was a beautiful lady, who looked to be in her early thirties, sitting at the center of the room. Even though she had concealed her cultivation, her subtle gestures had a peculiar air to them, a feeling that he had felt from Wu Shi and Guild Leader Han as well. It seemed that she was a Primordial Spirit realm expert, too.

"Vice Guild Leader Xu, this is the master teacher who wishes to awaken the spirit within his Saint intermediate-tier artifact!" the attendant introduced.

"Un." Vice Guild Leader Xu nodded before turning her assessing gaze toward Zhang Xuan. With a slightly surprised expression, she asked, "You have a Saint intermediate-tier artifact?"

She could tell that the young man before her was only at Saint 1-dan pinnacle. Even if he was a master teacher, he should not be qualified to wield such a strong artifact yet.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded as he brought the Golden Origin Cauldron out from

his storage ring. "The spirit of my artifact has fallen into a deep sleep, so I hope that Vice Guild Leader Xu can help me awaken it."

"Deep sleep?" Vice Guild Leader Xu got up from her seat and walked up to the Golden Origin Cauldron. After a careful examination, a tight frown etched itself onto her forehead, and she turned her gaze back toward Zhang Xuan.

"Its will is currently deep in sleep. Are you intending to create a new will to replace it, or do you intend to wake it from its sleep?"

There were two ways for an artifact with a dormant spirit to regain spirituality. Firstly, creating a new spirit and replacing the dormant spirit with it. Secondly, awakening the dormant spirit.

"I intend to wake it from its sleep," Zhang Xuan quickly replied.

Creating a new spirit within the Golden Origin Cauldron was equivalent to having the current Golden Origin Cauldron killed. That was something that he would never do.

"This might pose to be a little difficult..." Vice Guild Leader Xu shook her head. Just as she was about to continue speaking, someone suddenly knocked at the door once more, and an attendant walked in.

"Vice Guild Leader Xu, Elder Dao Kou wants you to enchant his disciple's Embryonic Soul in order to push for a breakthrough to Primordial Spirit realm!"

"Dao Kou?" Vice Guild Leader Xu frowned. "Tell him that I don't have any more slots for today..."

But before she could finish her words, an elder suddenly barged in with a middle-aged man following behind him.

"No more slots? I'm quite certain I heard that you have only conducted spirit enchantments for two people so far. Shouldn't you still have one more slot today?"

Chapter 1097

I Hate It When Others Pose Before Me

The elder seemed to be in his sixties. He had snowy hair and sharp eyebrows that were reminiscent of arrows. The intense aura of slaughter that he carried hinted that he was a veteran of the battlefield, and the great power pulsating from his body revealed that he was a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm primary stage cultivator.

"He's one of the Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows, Earth Flitting Bandit Dao Kou!"

Upon seeing the other party's appearance, the face of the attendant swiftly paled in fright, and he quickly sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan. "That man over there is known as the Earth Flitting Bandit, and he's a dominant figure among those living near the Northern Meadows. Not only does he wield outstanding strength, more importantly, he is arrogant and obeys no rules. It's best not to get on his bad side."

The Northern Meadows was the name of a territory under Qingyuan Conferred Empire, and it spanned over an area that was even larger than Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire. To be able to become a dominant power there bore testimony to the immense strength that Dao Kou wielded.

"So what if he obeys no rules? Vice Guild Leader Xu has already taken my spirit stones, is she intending to go back on her words?" Zhang Xuan shook his head, paying no heed to what the attendant was saying.

The Master Teacher Pavilion would not allow lawlessness to occur in areas where it was stationed. Even if the other party was a Primordial Spirit realm expert, he would still have to lower himself accordingly.

"That's not what I mean. The Earth Flitting Bandit Dao Kou is a vindictive person, so you have to be careful around him. It's not his first time snatching spirit enchantment slots from others, and the previous clients who have turned him down ended up suffering tragic fates."

While the attendant was filling Zhang Xuan in on the matter, Vice Guild Leader Xu

shook her head and said, "I have only conducted spirit enchantment for two clients so far, but this gentleman over here arrived before you, and he has already paid the fee for it as well. Thus, I'm afraid that you will have to wait for the next session!"

As the vice guild leader of the Spirit Awakener Guild, it was a given that she would have to obey the rules.

Not to mention, the person before her was a master teacher at that.

"You said that this lad came earlier than me? That's an easy problem to resolve!" With a hearty laugh, Dao Kou walked up to Zhang Xuan, and with an authoritative and pressurizing voice, he said, "This friend over here, hand your slot to me. You paid a hundred high-tier spirit stones earlier, right? Here are two hundred, consider it compensation from me!"

As he said those words, he flicked his wrist, and a pile of two hundred high-tier spirit stones appeared on the ground before him.

To double the price in a single breath, this was definitely a deal that few could resist.

Right after saying those words, Dao Kou placed his hands behind his back, waiting for the other party to pick up the high-tier spirit stones. In his view, there was no way a Saint 1-dan cultivator would be so foolish as to offend him over a mere slot.

Contrary to his expectations, the young man did not seem to have heard what he had said at all. The young man continued looking at Vice Guild Leader Xu and asked, "You said that it will be difficult to awaken its spirit, may I know what the difficulties you will face are? Perhaps, I might be able to offer some assistance..."

Seeing how the young man was disregarding his teacher, a look of displeasure surfaced on the middle-aged man's face as he bellowed furiously, "Brat, are you deaf? Can't you hear that my teacher is talking to you?"

However, Zhang Xuan continued speaking to Vice Guild Leader Xu as if the middle-aged man was invisible. "I might not have much of an understanding of spirit enchantment at the moment, but I am willing to learn."

"Learn?" Vice Guild Leader Xu shook her head. "Spirit awakener isn't a unique occupation, but it isn't something that one can master swiftly. It's unlikely for you to be able to make it in time if you start learning now. Waking a dormant spirit requires

very precise control, and it's a particularly troublesome process as well. I can't guarantee that I'll be able to succeed."

"This..." Zhang Xuan frowned. "Then... will there be any harm if you fail to wake the Golden Origin Cauldron up?"

Failure was still acceptable. What would be truly unacceptable was if the Golden Origin Cauldron's spirit dissipated as a result of it.

"Don't worry, failure will not cause any harm to the spirit of the artifact," Vice Guild Leader Xu replied with a smile.

"I'll have to trouble Vice Guild Leader Xu on this matter then. If you wake the Golden Origin Cauldron up, I'll surely repay your favor generously!" Zhang Xuan bowed deeply.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. I am not really confident of success, so I ask of you not to hold too much hope. However, rest assured that I'll try my best!" Vice Guild Leader Xu nodded.

Given that the other party was a master teacher and had such a valuable artifact in his possession, he was bound to be no ordinary figure. Thus, Vice Guild Leader Xu's voice showed not the slightest hint of disrespect.

However, while Vice Guild Leader Xu dared not provoke the young man before her, the same could not be said for Dao Kou and the middle-aged man.

"Brat, we are talking to you over here. How dare you disregard us?" Not daring to offend the vice guild leader, the middle-aged man walked straight up to Zhang Xuan with blatant killing intent in his eyes.

It was one thing for the other party to disregard him, but how dare the other party disregard his teacher as well? This was unforgivable!

With his Saint 3-dan pinnacle cultivation, even if he did not make a move, the pressure he exerted was sufficient to leave any Saint 1-dan cultivator trembling in fear.

Zhang Xuan shot a nonchalant glance at the middle-aged man before speaking impassively, "Young man, watch your attitude. If you show some humility, I can consider replying to your request!"

"You're seeking death!" Hearing those words, the middle-aged man's face twitched in anger.

To think that a twenty-year-old brat would dare to address him as a young man and speak to him as if an elder lecturing a junior. He could not help but feel overwhelmed.

Boom!

Unable to hold himself back any longer, the middle-aged man raised his palm and thrust it toward Zhang Xuan.

Seeing that sight, Vice Guild Leader Xu's face darkened. She instinctively stepped forth to stop the middle-aged man, but before she really did anything, the young man raised his gaze and bellowed, "Scram!"

Boom!

It was as if a clap of thunder had exploded within the room.

Deng deng deng deng!

Seemingly having suffered a heavy blow, the middle-aged man's face suddenly turned ghastly pale before his attack could land, and he was forced to retreat eight steps back. Blood spewed from his mouth.

Even though the middle-aged man's cultivation was far higher than Zhang Xuan's, Zhang Xuan was a Celestial Saint whose fighting prowess was invincible beneath Primordial Spirit realm. Against a cultivator who was not even a master teacher, he didn't even need to lift a finger—just a shout could easily breach the latter's mental barriers and send his cultivation into disarray.

"Yan Qi!" Seeing that his student had suffered severe damage with a single shout, Dao Kou's face darkened. He quickly rushed forward and infused zhenqi into his disciple's body so as to suppress his wounds. After that was done, he raised his gaze and glared at the young man with a frosty gaze. "Terpsichore and demonic tunist? This friend over here, don't you think that you went overboard?"

With his vast battle experience, he could immediately see through the young man's attack.

It was just a single word, but infused within it was the strength of a demonic tunist and terpsichore, making it nigh impossible to guard against.

"If I hadn't retaliated, I would have been the one lying on the ground at this moment," Zhang Xuan replied coldly before turning his gaze away.

"My student is indeed a little hot-tempered, but he doesn't move without a reason!" Dao Kou sneered coldly. "Since you have harmed my student, I believe that I have every right to return justice to him. Humph, seeing how you are just a measly Saint 1-dan cultivator, I won't bully you. Three moves. If you can touch even my clothes within three moves, I will drop this matter and leave immediately. Otherwise, I'll have you pass your slot on to me and leave, or else be prepared to face my wrath!"

As a powerhouse of the Northern Meadows, when had he ever suffered such humiliation?

"Three moves?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. "Sure, make your move!"

"..." Dao Kou suddenly felt incredibly stifled within. "I am saying that I'll allow you to make three moves against me!"

A look of amazement appeared on Zhang Xuan's face. "Are you certain?"

"Of course!" Dao Kou replied confidently.

While the young man might have seemed formidable, being able to force back and injure his disciple with a roar, he could tell that the other party was simply a skilled user of soul arts.

It was inevitable that those who devoted their effort to furthering their soul arts would be weak physically. This was common sense among cultivators. Besides, considering how young the other party was, how strong could he possibly be?

This was also why Dao Kou had proposed such a challenge!

Those in the Northern Meadows would know that this was an unfair match. Putting aside the fact that Dao Kou was a Saint 4-dan cultivator, he happened to specialize in speedy maneuvers as well. For him to be matched against a Saint 1-dan lad... that was simply overkill!

"Alright then!" Paying no heed to the smug smile on Dao Kou's lips, Zhang Xuan nodded.

In the next moment, his figure abruptly blurred. Before anyone could process what was going on, he was already standing before Dao Kou.

While he was reluctant to cultivate the Unbounded Voyager due to the multitude of flaws in it, he had not left it lying around the past month. He had been trying to fuse portions of it into the Heaven's Path Movement Art, and this had raised his speed significantly. While it was still impossible to pull off the near instantaneous movement of the Unbounded Voyager, it was still a fearsome ability in close quarters.

From the moment he moved to the point he appeared before Dao Kou's eyes, it did not even take a tenth of a breath.

Hu la!

Right after Zhang Xuan's figure appeared, a fist swiftly followed.

"You..." Not expecting the other party to rush at him before he was even ready, and with such speed at that, Dao Kou's face paled in fight.

He immediately raised his hands to retaliate, but to his shock, he realized that the fist of the young man before him was far swifter than he was.

A sharp pain assaulted his chest, and with a cry of agony, he was sent flying away.

Peng!

Knocked heavily into a wall, Dao Kou slowly slid to the ground before his eyes rolled up. He had fainted.

"The Earth Flitting Bandit Dao Kou specializes in speed, and his movement technique, Fallen Footsteps, allows him to move as swiftly as an elusive specter. You really mustn't fight with him..."

It sounded complicated in words, but everything happened within a split second. When the young attendant heard Zhang Xuan accept challenge, he hurriedly sent a telepathic message over. However, before he could finish his words, Dao Kou was already lying helplessly on the ground. Rendered completely speechless, he felt as if

insanity was about to overrun his mind.

From the looks of it, it was apparent that the young man before him was not too much older than he was. Yet, who would have thought that he was able to severely injure an Embryonic Soul realm expert with a bellow and a Primordial Spirit realm expert with a fist?

With his movement technique, Fallen Footsteps, the Flitting Earth Bandit Dao Kou could outmaneuver even a Primordial Spirit pinnacle expert. It was for this technique that he was renowned throughout the Northern Meadows. Yet, before Dao Kou could utilize his movement technique, he was knocked out.

The attendant could not help but gulp in fear.

It was fortunate that he had not thought of stealing the Saint intermediate-tier artifact from the other party's hands. If he had done so... he could very well have been the one lying on the ground at this very moment.

"Teacher!"

At that moment, the middle-aged man also finally recovered from his daze, and he quickly rushed forward to save his teacher.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan glanced down at the unconscious Dao Kou and shook his head.

Three moves?

You can't even withstand a single one! With such meagre strength, what are you showing off for?

I thought that you would at least be a worthwhile opponent.

Honestly, I despise people like you who try to pose when you don't even have the capability to do so.

Shameful! Truly shameful!

To be fair, if Dao Kou had used his true prowess as a Primordial Spirit realm expert against Zhang Xuan from the very start, he would have at least been able to stand his

ground.

However, of all things, he had chosen to give Zhang Xuan a three-move advantage; he was just asking for suffering!

Not everyone was qualified to allow Zhang Xuan an advantage!

Putting aside a mere Primordial Spirit realm primary stage, not even the Leaving Aperture realm primary stage Skyleaf King had dared give him any advantages, and despite that, the Skyleaf King had still ended up being crushed in the end!

While Zhang Xuan's strength was still a little off from matching up to Primordial Spirit realm experts, he had many aces up his sleeves that would allow him to easily subdue them in battle.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan shook his head and stared into the distance. A forlorn look crept into his eyes, as if an undefeated expert asking for a single worthy rival.

"I hate it when others pose before me, and you just had to do it. You really put me in a spot there."

Chapter 1098

Taking the Spirit Awakener Examination

To be honest, he had already been very low profile by not bringing Wu shi, Guild Leader Han, or the Master Teacher Pavilion into the picture, but that fellow just had to offer up his face for a good slap.

How was Zhang Xuan supposed to hold himself back?

Forget it! As an adult, I should remain calm in the face of a child's tantrums.

Ignoring the teacher-disciple duo, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to Vice Guild Leader Xu.

Upon sensing the other party's gaze on her, Vice Guild Leader Xu's eyebrows shot up.

The reason she had sided with Zhang Xuan earlier was because he was a master teacher, and it was important for her to uphold rules in the Spirit Awakener Guild. She had intended to stop Dao Kou if he really made a move against the young man, but to her surprise, the battle ended before she could even say a word.

Without a doubt, it was a thorough victory for the young man before her!

For a Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivator to knock out a Saint 4-dan expert with a single punch...

Just where in the world did this monster pop up from?

A thought suddenly emerged in Vice Guild Leader Xu's mind. Could it be that... he's an expert from the Combat Master Hall?

Combat masters tended to seclude themselves so that they could focus their efforts on their training. As such, even though there was a Combat Master Hall branch in Qingyuan City, she had not really seen many combat masters around.

As such, she did not know much about the combat masters either. However,

considering that the Saint 1-dan pinnacle young man was able to knock out a Primordial Spirit realm expert so easily, there was little doubt that he was one of the legendary combat masters, and from the looks of it, his standing was likely rather high as well.

This would explain why he had a Saint intermediate-tier artifact in his possession.

Previously, Vice Guild Leader Xu had thought that the young man was only able to remain safe due to the protection from the Master Teacher Pavilion, but from the looks of it, his individual strength seemed to play a huge role in it as well.

While Vice Guild Leader Xu knew that the young man before her was not an ordinary figure, she still thought that it was best to offer a word of advice after some thought.

"Gongzi 1, it'll be best for you to remain on your guard. The Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows are extremely famous figures. The Flitting Earth Bandit Dao Kou is one thing, but his elder brother, the Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu, will be a difficult foe to fight against. It's said that he has already reached Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle, and he possesses many sinister means, making him a difficult opponent to deal with."

Of course, with just a cultivation of Primordial Spirit realm primary stage, there was no way Dao Kou could become a dominant power of the Northern Meadows. The one who was truly formidable of the Twin Bandits was the elder brother, Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu!

Wielding incredible strength, even Vice Guild Leader Xu would not dare face him in a direct battle.

After all, spirit awakener was only a supporting occupation. Their abilities were not suited for battling.

"Thank you for your advice!" Knowing that the other party was advising him out of goodwill, Zhang Xuan responded with a smile. After which, he glanced at the Golden Origin Cauldron and asked, "May I ask, when will it be convenient for you to wake up my artifact?"

"Let's do it right now," replied Vice Guild Leader Xu.

She first walked around the Golden Origin Cauldron twice before abruptly pressing

her palm against a certain portion of the Golden Origin Cauldron.

Weng!

A brilliant light shrouded the Golden Origin Cauldron.

Zhang Xuan stared at the situation nervously.

Around ten minutes later, Vice Guild Leader Xu retracted her palm before taking several steps backward. By this moment, her face was already ghastly pale. "It seems like I was underestimating the difficulty of the matter. If I'm not mistaken, your cauldron fell into a deep sleep from being struck by lightning, correct? If that's the case, I fear that I am not sufficiently powerful to wake it!

"Spirits was extremely weak to lightning; I believe you should know of this as well. If it had fallen asleep due to other reasons, I might still have been able to wake it by pushing myself a little further. But this is beyond my current capability."

Vice Guild Leader Xu shook her head.

"Then... do you know of anyone who can wake the spirit in my artifact then?" Zhang Xuan asked.

After a moment of contemplation, Vice Guild Leader Xu replied, "Based on what I have seen so far, the lightning has not only eroded the will within, it has also left some remnants throughout the cauldron. To wake the spirit within the cauldron, one would have to drive one's soul energy beyond the region filled with lightning remnants. In order to do so, one would have to be at Leaving Aperture realm at the very minimum. During the Leaving Aperture Ordeal, the cultivator's Primordial Spirit is tempered by lightning, granting it decent resistance to lightning. However, I fear that no one in the Qingyuan Empire Spirit Awakener Guild has reached that level yet!"

Even the strongest individual in the Qingyuan Empire Spirit Awakener Guild, their guild leader, had barely reached Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle. She was still far from reaching Leaving Aperture realm, so it was unlikely for her to be able to accomplish the task in the short-run.

"You mean that... due to lightning remnants on the cauldron, it'll be impossible for anyone beneath Leaving Aperture realm to wake the spirit within? What about souls with resistance to lightning? Will they work as well?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

"Theoretically, yes. But of course, the soul would still have to possess proficiency comparable to a 7-star spirit awakener in order to wake the spirit within. However... where in the world can one find a soul that is resistant to lightning?" Vice Guild Leader Xu replied.

Primordial Spirits and souls were of the yin attribute, which meant they were highly vulnerable to lightning. So far, she had never heard of any Primordial Spirit or soul beneath Leaving Aperture realm that did not fear lightning.

"Proficiency comparable to a 7-star spirit awakener?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before lifting his gaze to ask, "Vice Guild Leader Xu, may I know what the conditions to browsing through the books in your guild library are?"

Since there was no one in the Qingyuan Empire Spirit Awakener Guild who was sufficiently skilled to wake the Golden Origin Cauldron, perhaps he should give it a try himself.

While lightning was the greatest threat to any soul or Primordial Spirit, his soul had been through the field of lightning and Saint Ascension Ordeal, thus making it more wholesome than the others. Ordinary lightning could no longer pose any threat to him.

"Conditions to browsing through the books in our library?" Vice Guild Leader Xu was slightly taken aback by Zhang Xuan's abrupt question. She hesitated for a brief moment before replying, "Our guild doesn't use the conventional rank restriction that other occupations use. As long as you pay a certain fee, you will be able to freely browse through our books and even copy them if you like. However, you aren't allowed to take away the original book."

Zhang Xuan was delighted to hear those words. "I wish to browse through all of the spirit awakener books, from 4-star to 7-star. May I know how much I have to pay?"

Only unique occupations with a perfect heritage would be stricter on their hierarchy. Typical occupations did not have that much requirements.

In fact, some would even loosen the conditions so as to attract more people into it, thus bolstering their forces.

Vice Guild Leader Xu did a swift calculation before responding. "To browse through all of the books, you will have to pay a sum of two thousand high-tier spirit stones."

"Here you go!"

With a flick of his wrist, two thousand high-tier spirit stones appeared on the ground.

"This..." Vice Guild Leader Xu was taken aback.

Even she would have difficulty whipping out two thousand high-tier spirit stones all of a sudden, and yet, the other party willingly forked them out so decisively just so to browse through books. Wasn't he a little too extravagant?

"Alright, I'll have to trouble Vice Guild Leader Xu to show me to the library."

To the current Zhang Xuan, it was not an issue for him to whip out two thousand high-tier spirit stones. If he could save the Golden Origin Cauldron and learn a new occupation on top of that, it would definitely be well worth the sum spent.

"Alright..." Seeing the earnest look on the young man's face, Vice Guild Leader Xu could tell that the other party was not joking. Thus, she accepted the spirit stones and said, "Follow me."

Zhang Xuan swiftly stowed the Golden Origin Cauldron back into his storage ring before following her.

Leaving the room, they walked through a long corridor for quite some time before eventually arriving at a vast room.

It was the library of the Spirit Awakener Guild.

At the entrance of the room, Vice Guild Leader Xu handed a token to Zhang Xuan before she began briefly explaining the rules.

"You are free to read any book you want, and if you want, you can cultivate in here too. If you suddenly have a stroke of inspiration while reading the books, there are also puppets that you can try enchanting. Those puppets are classified by ranks, and the higher rank the puppet is, the more difficult it is to enchant it. If you succeed in enchanting the spirit within a puppet of a certain rank, that means that you have achieved the corresponding level of mastery as a spirit awakener as well."

While spirit awakener was an extremely lucrative occupation in Qingyuan Empire, it was not a unique occupation, so it was not bound by the rules that governed them.

Even the examination for it was relatively informal and simple.

"Thank you!" Zhang Xuan nodded before taking the token from the other party's hand.

"Alright, you may enter now. Actually, there are quite a handful of people who visit our library everyday in hopes of learning the art of spirit enchantment, but it's a pity that very few of them succeed!" Vice Guild Leader Xu sighed deeply.

Considering how lucrative the occupation was, it was inevitable that many wished to learn its arts. However, the conditions to become a true spirit awakener were simply too harsh. On top of possessing a strong soul, one also had to be capable of pulling off precise maneuvers with their soul energy. In a sense, being able to become a spirit awakener could be considered an inborn talent. Just reading the books was not sufficient for one to grasp the art of spirit enchantment.

Without saying much, Zhang Xuan pushed the door open and stepped in.

The first floor of the library was not too huge, consisting of only several dozen shelves. All in all, there were a few hundred thousand books.

Just as Vice Guild Leader Xu had said earlier, there were quite a few people flipping through books within the library. Most likely, they were also intending to grasp the art of spirit enchantment, just like him.

In order to not stand out too much from the others, Zhang Xuan walked up to the first shelf and casually took out a book. Putting on an impression of being absorbed into the book, his eyes slowly glanced down the shelves.

Hualala!

Whichever book his eyes fell upon swiftly materialized within the Library of Heaven's Path.

In less than ten minutes, Zhang Xuan had already succeeded in collecting all of the books on the shelves.

Compile! Zhang Xuan willed.

Innumerable books gathered together, fusing as one to form a single book. Zhang Xuan flipped it open lightly and began browsing through it.

It was the 4-star Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art.

Swiftly flipping through the contents, Zhang Xuan gained a deeper understanding of the occupation.

To put it in the simplest terms, enchantment was the act of using one's soul energy to nourish the spirit of an artifact or the soul of a cultivator.

The prerequisite to doing so was for one's soul to be attributeless. This was so as to avoid the spirit awakener's infusion of soul energy from being rejected by the receiver.

Just the very first prerequisite of their soul being attributeless was already a hurdle that most cultivators would never be able to overcome in their life. However, this was not a problem for Zhang Xuan at all.

As one who cultivated the Heaven's Path Soul Art, his soul was devoid of any attributes. Otherwise, he would not have been able to imitate the aura of others perfectly and deceive others with his disguise.

After browsing through the entire book, Zhang Xuan swiftly internalized what he had learned before driving his soul energy through his body. All in all, it took him less than an hour to fully grasp the 4-star Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art.

Let me see if it works or not, Zhang Xuan thought as he walked to the corner of the room, where he found a bizarre-looking puppet. The puppet had eight arms and four heads, and it seemed to be made of some kind of peculiar material. It was impossible to determine what tier it was.

Even so, Zhang Xuan could not be bothered to use his Eye of Insight or Library of Heaven's Path on it. Tapping into his soul energy, he placed his palm on the ground in front of the puppet before extending his consciousness toward it.

In an instant, Zhang Xuan suddenly found himself standing in a world of perfect darkness. Driving his soul energy, he sought to create a spark of light within this world.

Weng!

A burst of light shrouded the puppet.

Geji! Geji!

A few breaths later, Zhang Xuan successfully enchanted a spirit into the puppet, and it gradually came to life. Its hands and heads began twisting and moving about randomly, creating quite a peculiar sight.

Opening his eyes, Zhang Xuan thought with a smile, Seems like the 4-star spirit awakener examination isn't too hard after all.

He had been wondering how difficult the occupation would be, but judging from how he could enchant a spirit within the puppet so easily, it didn't seem to be as difficult as he had thought.

After that was done, he began making his way to the second floor.

There were also several hundred thousand books on the second floor as well. It did not take long for Zhang Xuan to finish collecting them and form the 5-star Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art.

Once he was done grasping it, he headed to the puppet in the corner and successfully enchanted a spirit into it once more. Seeing that he was done for the second floor, he headed up to the next floor.

...

Four hours later, Zhang Xuan stepped onto the fourth floor.

The entire room was filled with 7-star spirit awakener books. He swiftly collected them into the Library of Heaven's Path and compiled the 7-star Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art before heading to the corner where the puppet had been placed on the previous floors. However, when he arrived at his destination, what he saw left him with a deep frown instead.

There isn't a puppet for this floor? Wait a moment, what is that pillar for?

There was no puppet for him to enchant on the fourth floor. In its place was a fairly large pillar that extended from the ceiling to the floor.

Perhaps, it might be a weapon. If I successfully enchant it, I should be qualified as a 7-star spirit awakener!

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan walked up to the pillar.

Chapter 1099

The Lively Guild

On the previous few floors were the four-headed eight-armed puppets. Even though there was none to be seen on this floor, the black pillar before him should serve a function similar to that of the puppets before.

"Never mind, I'll know once I give it a try..." Sitting on the ground, Zhang Xuan placed his hand on the ground, and a circle of light swiftly shrouded the pillar. Just like before, Zhang Xuan extended his consciousness to the pillar, and he suddenly found himself plunged into a world of absolute darkness.

"Light up!" Knowing that the presence of light within this dark world represented the successful enchantment of the object, Zhang Xuan drove his Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art and tapped on the space ahead of him with his finger.

Weng!

A spark of light came to life, warding off the darkness. However, its radiance was extremely weak, reminiscent of a candlelight flickering in the midst of a powerful gale, on the verge of extinguishing at any moment.

"Hm?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Previously, as long as he were to drive his Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, he would have been able to light up the entire world. However, it had only managed to produce a spark of light this time around, and it looked as if it would be extinguished at any moment. This meant that due to certain properties of the artifact, it was much harder to enchant a spirit into it.

"As expected of the 7-star spirit awakener examination. It's indeed much harder than the examinations before..." In face of such a situation, instead of wallowing in his failure, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement instead.

Honestly speaking, he felt that the previous few examinations were nonsensical. It was so easy that just anyone could clear it with ease. Finally, there was something that was

worthy of a challenge!

"I sure would like to see how difficult the 7-star examination will be... Regardless of the cost, I'll definitely be going to light you up today!" With a worthy challenge standing before him, Zhang Xuan's fighting will was stoked.

While other spirit awakeners could only conduct three enchantments within a day before going into a period of long rest, Zhang Xuan found that he wasn't bounded by the same limits. Perhaps it was due to the flawless Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, or maybe it was simply because his soul was far stronger to his counterparts, he found that he could easily enchant dozens of times in a single day without feeling fatigued.

Thus, he raised his finger and tapped the space in front of him once more.

Yet another spark of light appeared. Just like the one before, it was flickering weakly amidst the darkness, but nevertheless, it still succeeded in driving the darkness slightly further away.

"Merge!" Driving his soul energy, Zhang Xuan brought the two sparks together, and they slowly fused together with one another.

As those two sparks were spirits which he had enchanted into the pillar, it harnessed his will, so it wasn't too difficult for him to merge them together.

But of course, it was also due to the flawless Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art that he was able to produce identical spirits that could be merged together in the first place. While ordinary spirit awakeners could enchant spirits of similar attributes, it was inevitable that the spirits they enchanted would differ slightly from one another due to imperfections.

Naturally, it went without saying that spirits of differing attributes couldn't be merged together. Otherwise, that would be equivalent to creating two wills within a single artifact. The two wills would vie with one another for possession over the artifact, and if things were to go wrong, the weapon could very well be destroyed. Back then, it was due to this problem that the Hongyuan royal family's Bodhi Saint Tree nearly lost its life.

Hu!

The merged spark was significantly brighter than before, lighting up a significant portion of the darkness. While it was still insufficient to drive off the darkness entirely, the spark was no longer at risk of extinguishing soon anymore.

"Indeed, it works!" Zhang Xuan thought in excitement.

It was out of a moment of inspiration that he thought of merging the spirits together, and he hadn't really thought that it would work out so well. Delighted, he continued tapping the space ahead of him.

Hu hu!

Another two sparks appeared, and Zhang Xuan swiftly merged them into the one.

With four sparks merged together, the initial flicker of flame had finally grown into a flame torch. It glowed brilliantly amidst the darkness, bringing light to at least a radius of hundred meters.

"What a massive space..." With enhanced visibility, Zhang Xuan was finally able to get a glimpse into the space he was in.

For the puppets before, the worlds of darkness were only several meters to around a dozen meters in radius. A single spark of light was more than sufficient to light up the entire space. But in the space he was currently in, he had already lit up more than a hundred meters of the area, but the end was still nowhere in sight... Wasn't this weapon a little way too big?

The larger a weapon was, the stronger its spirit had to be in order to sustain it. But... he had already enchanted four spirits, and yet, the end was still nowhere in sight. Wasn't this pillar an extremely fearsome existence?

"Well, I haven't thought that the 7-star spirit awakener examination would be so difficult. However, I don't believe that I won't be able to light it up with my strength!" Seeing that even a torch of flame was sufficient to light up the entire world, Zhang Xuan began feeling a little competitive.

As one who cultivated the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, if he couldn't clear the examination, wouldn't he be letting down the Library of Heaven's Path in his mind?

"Continue!"

Driving his soul energy swiftly, Zhang Xuan tapped on the area before him and produced several more sparks of light. However, the consecutive enchantments had expended quite a bit of his strength, causing his face to pale from weakness.

Even though his soul was much stronger than an average person, there was still a limit to how much he could bear. If he were to overexert himself, it could potentially create grievous damage to his soul.

Hu hu hu!

Fusing all of the sparks together, it didn't take long for the torch of flames to turn into a bonfire. The area shrouded by light expanded amidst the world of darkness, but there was still no sign of reaching the ends.

Until the world was fully lit up, the enchantment couldn't be considered a success.

"Forget it, I'll go all out!" Gritting his teeth tightly, Zhang Xuan continued the process frenziedly.

After fusing thirty-two sparks together, the bonfire finally turned into something that was reminiscent of a blazing sea of flames or a searing sun, illuminating the surroundings.

Hong long long!

The space trembled, and finally, Zhang Xuan was finally able to see the ends of the space.

To his astonishment, the consciousness of the artifact actually extended for several kilometers! It was no wonder why it was so difficult to enchant a spirit into it.

Having finally succeeded, Zhang Xuan felt a feeling of weakness consuming his body. At the same time, he couldn't help but feel deeply intrigued.

Having cultivated the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, his comprehension of spirit enchantment had reached 7-star pinnacle, and his skills could possibly be on par with even 8-star primary spirit awakeners. He was certain that Vice Guild Leader Xu and the others weren't able to match up to him in terms of efficiency in enchanting.

Considering how he had nearly tired himself to death before clearing the

examination... did they really clear the same examination as well?

Wasn't it a little too hard for a 7-star spirit awakener?

...

In a vast room in the Spirit Awakener Guild, three ladies were seated together. They were the most three most influential figures in the guild, Vice Guild Leader Xu, Vice Guild Leader Chen, and Guild Leader Ruan.

"Xu Ying, what happened? You should know that the Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows aren't opponents whom we can afford to provoke. The Flitting Earth Bandit Dao Kou might not be much, but the Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu is not an enemy we can defeat! If they were to come after us, we will have to owe the Master Teacher Pavilion yet another favor..." Guild Leader Ruan said with a frown.

Dao Kou had come to have his disciple's soul enchanted so as to push for a breakthrough to Primordial Spirit realm, only to end up being pummeled unconscious instead... It was after hearing that news that Guild Leader Ruan hurriedly called for an urgent meeting with the two vice guild leaders.

If the Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows were reasonable individuals, they wouldn't have been so fearful of them either. There were none in Qingyuan City who were unaware of their callousness and lawlessness. If they were to attempt to get back at them for this matter, given the limited strength the Spirit Awakener Guild wielded, they might find themselves in a helpless position.

By then, they would have no choice but to turn to the Master Teacher Pavilion for help.

"It's actually like this..." Vice Guild Leader Xu swiftly went through the matter concerning Zhang Xuan.

"You are saying that... the fellow could very well be a combat master?" Guild Leader Ruan contemplated for a moment before nodding in agreement. "It would be best if that's the case. No matter how arrogant the Twin Bandits are, they wouldn't dare to challenge the Combat Master Hall!"

Putting aside that the Combat Master Hall was considered as a subsidiary of the Master teacher Pavilion, just the sheer amount of experts they had in their midst was sufficient to deter any occupation from offending them.

"If the Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu were to come and attempt to get even with us, you must have sure to push all the blame to that fellow. Don't bring unnecessary trouble into our Spirit Awakener Guild. We are only a supporting occupation, we don't have the strength to get involved in such conflicts." Guild Leader Ruan instructed.

As spirit awakeners devoted their efforts to cultivating their soul so as to further their spirit enchantment abilities, they tend to be relatively weaker as compared to their counterparts of other occupations. As a result, they had no choice but to avoid conflicts as far as they could.

To be honest, if not for the order established by the Master Teacher Pavilion, there would probably have been many who would attempt to kidnap spirit awakeners for the valuable ability they possessed. They wouldn't have been able to run such a lucrative business without any fear.

It was precisely for this reason that Spirit Awakener Guilds would only be established in places where the Master Teacher Pavilion held dominant power. They would avoid anywhere aside from those places so as to avoid unneeded trouble.

"Alright." Understanding the position they were in, Vice Guild Leader Xu nodded in agreement. Suddenly, a thought came to her mind, and she asked, "Right, the young man hasn't left yet. He said that he wishes to learn the art of spirit enchantment, and he's currently reading in the library."

"He's reading in the library? A man wants to learn spirit enchantment?" Guild Leader Ruan frowned.

It was not that Guild Leader Ruan was looking down on men, but spirit enchantment required very precise control which ladies were more apt at. As a result, there were very few men within the Spirit Awakener Guild.

"I've already dispatched my student to check on him to see if he's really studying. I think my student should be returning anytime now..." Vice Guild Leader Xu shared the same views as Guild Leader Ruan. She didn't think that it was likely that Zhang Xuan would successfully become a spirit awakener either. Six hours had passed, and the other party should have already noticed it was futile and gave up by now. Yet, he was still within the library. Thus, she couldn't help but feel a little apprehensive.

Jiya!

Right after speaking those words, a young lady suddenly barged into the room.

It was Vice Guild Leader Xu's student, a 6-star spirit awakener.

"How is it? Is that lad really studying?" Seeing that her student had returned, Vice Guild Leader Xu asked with a smile.

"Reporting to Guild Leader Ruan, teacher, and Vice Guild Leader Chen, not only has he been studying within this period of time... he has even taken the spirit awakener examination as well..." the young lady recalled what she had just seen, and a look of disbelief surfaced on her face.

"He has taken the spirit awakener examination?" Vice Guild Leader Xu frowned. "It doesn't seem like he knows much about the occupation the previous time I saw him... In just six hours after he started studying, he's already attempted the 4-star spirit awakener examination?"

In her previous encounter with Zhang Xuan, she could tell that the latter knew next to nothing about spirit awakeners. Yet, in such a state, he still dared to take the spirit awakener examination? You must be joking!

"He... Not only did he take the examination, he even succeeded in bringing the puppet that stands by the corner to life! The puppet is currently running around chaotically, and our sisters are trying our best to suppress it at the moment..." the young lady quickly replied.

"The puppet is running around chaotically? That can't be!"

This time, it was Guild Leader Ruan's turn to be perplexed. She turned to the young lady and asked, "One just has to successfully enchant two hands and one head of the puppet in order to clear the examination, so even if he were to successfully enchant the puppet, limited by its other body parts, it still shouldn't be able to move... How could it possibly be running around chaotically?"

"He... He enchanted all four heads and eight arms of the puppet, bringing its entire spirit to life!" With quivering lips, the young lady also looked as if she could hardly believe what she had just said either.

"He managed to bring its entire spirit to life?" Shocked by what they had just heard, the three of them stood up simultaneously.

Due to the limitations of the human soul, it was a nigh impossible feat to enchant a spirit which was capable of moving four heads simultaneously... Putting everything aside, even 7-star spirit awakeners like them couldn't dream of pulling something of that sort off. Yet, a fellow who knew nothing at all a moment ago managed to accomplish it just by reading a few hours of books?

"Just to confirm, you are saying that he managed to fully awaken the 4-star puppet?" Vice Guild Leader Xu asked anxiously.

If that was truly the case, the young man might very well be an extraordinarily talented spirit awakener!

"He didn't just awaken the 4-star puppet... the 5-star and 6-star puppets, he has awakened those too! Currently, he is on the fourth floor of the library, seated before a pillar at the corner of the wall. I'm not too sure what he's doing at the moment either..." the young lady said.

"You are saying that he managed to awaken the 5-star and 6-star puppet too?"

The bodies of the three of them jolted from shock.

A short moment later, Guild Leader Ruan frowned, "The 7-star puppet is spoiled, and as there hasn't been anyone qualified to take the 7-star spirit awakener examination in recent years, we haven't had it fixed yet. That pillar there should be the main pillar supporting our entire guild building. However, it isn't an artifact, so it shouldn't be possible to enchant a spirit into it. So, what could he be attempting to do..."

Boom!

Before Guild Leader Ruan could finish her words, the entire guild suddenly shook intensely.

Following which, an elder rushed into the room with a ghastly pale face.

"Bad news, guild leader! Our guild... has come to life!"

Chapter 1100

I Really Want To Keep a Low Profile!

"Our guild has come to life?" Guild Leader Ruan was taken aback.

The other two vice guild leaders were also perplexed as to what they were hearing.

"Yes! For some reason, our guild building suddenly stood up from the ground and ran away!" the elder cried anxiously.

Huala!

Before the elder could finish her words, the ground suddenly shook once more. Shortly after, outside the window, the top of the guild building, which bore some resemblance to the neck of a crane, suddenly leaned downward. The two windows at the very top seemed to serve as its eyes, as it assessed its surroundings curiously.

The many floors of the tower seemed to have become its body, and they shook non-stop, seemingly readying itself to take a step forward.

"This... the entire guild building has been enchanted with a spirit?" Guild Leader Ruan gulped down a mouthful of saliva and nearly cried.

Despite the unique design of their guild building, it was just an ordinary building and not an artifact. Given so, there should have been no way to enchant a spirit into it... How in the world did the fellow manage to accomplish it?

This was truly bad. Now that their guild building had a spirit, it seemed like it was about to run away at any moment...

If it were to really run away, how was she going to face the preceding guild leaders of the Spirit Awakener Guild...

"I heard that an elder of our guild has spent more than a hundred years to single-handedly forge the support structure of our guild building. According to the rumors, it's said that the support structure has reached the level of a Spirit-tier artifact. Could

it be that... he has succeeded in enchanting the support system?" At this moment, Vice Guild Leader Chen suddenly recalled something and asked.

The unique architecture of the Spirit Awakener Guild was in truth the effort of a single elder many years ago. It was said that she had forged the supporting structure using the same methods which one would use to craft weapons in order to grant it the enhanced durability and resilience it required... Perhaps that was the real reason why the enchantment succeeded.

But...

Considering the sheer size of the supporting structure, just how huge of a spirit would one have to enchant into it in order to bring it to life?

"Regardless of how he did it, we have to stop him. Otherwise, where will we go if the guild building were to escape?" Guild Leader Ruan said anxiously.

This wasn't the time for them to be thinking how it was done—their guild building was already on the verge of escaping! Putting aside that they would lose their place of dwelling, more importantly, the Spirit Awakener Guild would become a laughingstock for the entire city once that were to happen!

Thus, the trio rushed out of the room and headed towards the library. Before they could arrive at their destination, they suddenly saw a young man walking over with a confused look on his face. The young man also caught sight of them, and he immediately walked up to them.

"Vice Guild Leader Xu, what is going on? Why is your guild building moving about?" Zhang Xuan asked in bewilderment.

The Spirit Awakener Guild sure was eccentric. He was still sitting in the library when the entire guild suddenly rose from the ground, seemingly ready to run off... Where did their civility go?

If such a huge building were to run through the crowded streets of Qingyuan City, many would be injured!

Besides, even if no one was harmed, it would bound to cause great damage throughout the city pavement and the nearby buildings as well.

"You still dare to speak about it..." Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, the trio nearly spurted blood.

Do you really have no idea what you have just done?

You were the one who enchanted it, so how can you shamelessly shirk responsibility now that it's on the verge of running away...

Also... what's that expression of yours?

"Did you enchant a black pillar earlier?" Suppressing her urge to blow up, Vice Guild Leader Xu asked with forced composure.

"I did." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Barely after he succeeded in enchanting the black pillar, the entire building suddenly began moving. Thus, he could only rush out before examining what he had enchanted and whether he had truly succeeded or not.

"Regarding that... the black pillar is the supporting structure of the guild building. Thus, when you enchanted it, the entire guild came to life..." Vice Guild Leader Xu explained through gritted teeth.

"Ah..." Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He was still wondering why the Spirit Awakener Guild was so inconsiderate as to make its building move around in the middle of the city... But it seemed like he was actually the true culprit...

While others were enchanting weapons and souls, he actually enchanted an entire guild...

"Since you were the one who enchanted it, the guild building should be filled with gratitude towards you. I beg of you, get it to stop. If it were to get away, it would surely surely cause a huge commotion... Our Spirit Awakener Guild would be in deep trouble then..." Seeing that Zhang Xuan had finally understood what was going on, Guild Leader Ruan urged.

"Alright..." Not expecting that he would unintentionally land others into trouble just by taking the 7-star spirit awakener examination, Zhang Xuan's face reddened in

embarrassment. He quickly followed the trio out of the guild building.

Flying in the air, he looked at the massive building before him.

The building was extremely tall, almost reaching a hundred meters high. Its slender neck was swinging wildly in the air, reminiscent of a crane.

By this moment, everyone within the Spirit Awakener Guild had already evacuated from the building, and they were staring at that 'living' behemoth before them with flabbergasted looks.

"This... How do I get it to stop?" Seeing how the massive figure was preparing to sprint away as fast as it could, Zhang Xuan's mouth twitched. He quickly turned to Vice Guild Leader Xu and asked.

"I don't know either. You can try asking it, it should listen to you..." Guild Leader Ruan replied.

"Listen to me?" Zhang Xuan turned his gaze back to the massive figure before him with a doubtful look. In that moment, the Spirit Awakener Guild seemed to have caught sight of him, and it excitedly cuddled up to him with its thick neck.

"..." Zhang Xuan was stunned.

It seemed like his plan to keeping a low profile had backfired.

Before such a huge crowd, a guild's base of operation was cuddling up to him, as if an obedient pet fawning on its master...

Honestly, all I wanted to do is to keep a low profile and not cause any trouble...

Dark lines streaked across Zhang Xuan's face. Helpless, he could only reach out to stroke the other party's neck and say, "Alright, you should stay here obediently. Try not to move around if there's no need to do so..."

Roar!

Hearing those words, the massive building swiftly stopped its movements and obediently planted itself back onto the ground.

"Alright, it's done..." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He quickly turned back to look at Guild Leader Ruan and the others, only to see them staring at him as if he was some kind of terrifying monster.

"Cough cough. This gongzi over here, please follow me back in. I'll pass your spirit awakener emblem to you. At the same time, our guild wish to discuss the matter of taming the guild building with you... As long as you can transfer the ownership of the guild building to us somehow, we are willing to reward you handsomely!" Seeing as more and more people were gathering in the area, Guild Leader Ruan knew that this wasn't the place to discuss matters, so she gestured Zhang Xuan back into the guild building.

No matter what, this building was the base of operation for their Spirit Awakener Guild. It was one thing while it was dead, but now that it had come to life, the least they could do was to claim ownership of their own building. Otherwise, if their building were to suddenly riot on them and escape, how embarrassing it would be for them?

"Alright." Zhang Xuan knew that he was at fault for this matter, and he also wasn't willing to continue serving as a public exhibit by remaining in the area. Thus, he followed the trio back into the guild building.

...

While Zhang Xuan was busy learning the art of spirit enchantment in the Spirit Awakener Guild, something was happening in the Combat Master Hall. A large group of combat masters had discussed together with one another to discuss how they should deal with the academy that they were going to hold an exchange with.

Xiao Qin was a Thousand Men Commander from the Martial Arts Division of the Combat Master Ten Divisions. Highly talented and driven, he was also known as his peers as Lunatic Xiao for his crazed passion for cultivation.

He had always regarded his identity as a combat master as his pride and honor. But recently, news regarding Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy kept echoing in his ears no matter where he went, and it had left him deeply displeased.

Just when did they, combat masters, had been lowered to the point where they had to conduct an exchange with an ordinary Master Teacher Academy?

The more he thought about it, the more furious he felt.

Unable to stand it any longer, he called his companion over and asked, "Is that Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy really as powerful as you all describe it out to be? No matter what, we, combat masters, are a gathering of top-notch geniuses chosen sieved out amongst the master teachers. Every single one of us wield strength that could easily rival those of higher cultivation realm than us. No matter how powerful their Xuanxuan Faction may be, it isn't possible for all of them to be on par with us. If that's truly the case, there would be no purpose in continuing the Combat Master Selection!"

"I share the same thoughts as well. But I believe you should have seen the reports sent back by Zhuo Qingfeng and the others too. I know Zhuo Qingfeng quite well, and he isn't one to spout nonsense on such matters!"

"I know that he won't spout nonsense, but I still find the matter hard to believe. Wait, those from the Xuanxuan Faction have just arrived in their accommodations, right? Why don't we take a look?"

"Now? Isn't the exchange three days later?"

"Yes, but it would be good for us to take a look in advance so as to gauge the strength of our opponents. This way, we will be able to dominate the exchange..."

"Sounds good. However, we must make sure that our hall master doesn't learn of this matter!"

"That's a given. Rest assured, we'll be heading there discreetly in plainclothes..."

...

All along, it had been their Combat Master Hall which had been conducting all kind of selection exercises to absorb the talents from the various organizations all over Qingyuan Empire. Yet, to think that a day would come where an ordinary Master Teacher Academy would knock on their door and have an exchange with them. In truth, Xiao Qin wasn't the only one who felt insulted by this matter. There were plenty of combat masters who felt that the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was beneath them as well.

Thus, when the other combat masters learned of Xiao Qin's plan, they also wanted to

tag along so as to see whether the rumors they had heard were exaggerations.

"Alright, let's go!"

Switching to their leisure clothes, the crowd began making their way over to the manor where the crowd from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy were currently residing in.

Not too long later, they encountered another group of plainclothes combat master.

"Combat Master Sun... You are all intending to cause those of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy some trouble as well?" Xiao Qin was slightly startled by the sudden appearance of the other group.

"Cause them some trouble? Of course not! We are just going there to see whether they are qualified to cross blows with us..." Combat Master Sun replied with a smile.

Seeing that their goals aligned with one another, the two groups decided to converge and proceed forward together. But after turning at a bend in the street, they met some familiar faces again.

"Combat Master Tan, you all..."

"Ah... We were just planning to pay our friends from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy a visit so as to see if the accommodation is to their liking..."

...

The manor wasn't too far away from the Combat Master Hall, but in the ten minutes journey, Xiao Qin met with eight waves of combat masters. All in all, there were at least several hundred of them.

"It seems like there are many who share the same thoughts as us!" Seeing how so many combat masters shared the same view as him, Xiao Qin nodded in satisfaction.

While the exchange was indeed set at three days from now, there was no particular rule stopping them from dropping by and greeting their guests!

"Guys, the other party will surely figure out that we are from the Combat Master Hall if we were to drop by just like that. How about we do this instead? For the time being,

the rest of you will wait at the teahouse outside while I head over to try out their skills. Once I'm done, I'll come back to report to you all..."

As they were about to reach the manor, Xiao Qin called for the entire party to stop before saying.

It was fine for them to interact with those of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, but if so many combat masters were to drop by at once, they could be cast under the suspicion of being hostile to their guests.

"Alright, we will wait here for you then. Return quickly, don't keep us waiting for too long..."

Xiao Qin's suggestion sounded reasonable to the party, so it didn't take long before he was able to receive the approval of the majority.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Xiao Qin made his way over to the manor.

The manor was one of the properties of the Combat Master Hall, so Xiao Qin was able to maneuver his way through it easily. Before long, he saw a group of Hongyuan students cultivating in a vast courtyard.

"This friend over here, may I know who you are looking for? Perhaps I might be of some help to you." Before Xiao Qin could get far, a smiling young man suddenly walked up to him and asked.

"I am Xiao Qin. I wish to meet the leader of your Xuanxuan Faction." Xiao Qin clasped his fist and responded.

"I am Jun Ruohuan, and I can be considered as one of the leaders in the Xuanxuan Faction. May I know how may I help you?" Ruohuan gongzi asked.

"I heard that the students of the Xuanxuan Faction possesses exceptional fighting prowess, so I couldn't resist coming over to try out your skills..." Xiao Qin replied.

"I see. That won't be a problem, I can have it arranged for you." Hearing that the other party wanted to try out their skills, Ruohuan gongzi could already roughly fathom a guess what was going on.

Thus, he beckoned with his hand and 'huala!', several thousand people appeared

around them.

"Here you go. They are all members of our Xuanxuan Faction. So, what kind of duel are you interested in? Feel free to state any request you have..."



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